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# P O E M S

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD



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COLLECTED POEMS

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To  
MY WIFE

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The five pages of verse, pp. 861-6, are from books published by Messrs. Collins, to whose courtesy I render thanks.

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*From*  
WONDERINGS AND LAND WORKERS





## WONDERINGS

OUT of a dateless darkness pictures gleam,  
But are they memories or only dream?  
One earliest image is a gorge of crags  
Drenched in a spray, with rainbows among jags,  
Fish-cruising ospreys gleaming, dipping, calling,  
And thunder and majesty of water falling,  
The endless onwards of a cataract  
In terror and exultation of its act.

Over a precipice it streamed, and broke  
To gliddery wool and after crashed to smoke,  
Uptwisted, and creamed on, and where it drave  
A path of wet stones led into a cave.  
Within that cavern, sheltered from the gorge,  
Men, stripped for effort, hammered at a forge;  
At what their hammers beat I cannot tell,  
With spurt of spark the fire rose and fell,  
The craftsmen's bodies gleamed, as sparks were blown.  
All this was shrewdly seen and inly known.  
Cataract, cave and smithy were as clear  
As things of home, as places once held dear.  
Three strangenesses come next, of sight or thought.  
High in the elms, the rooks their cradles wrought,  
And there, in sunlight, in an April sky  
Three immense floating giants passed me by;  
Three figures, linked as one, as one, intent  
Eastward, and staring east, at speed they went.  
They were not clouds, as living things they fared,  
I marvelled at their life, but was not scared;  
Whatever purpose, impulse or design  
Drove them, its splendour banished fear of mine.

Then, from behind a curtain, I beheld  
The frosty, moonless Heaven, many-stelled,  
And heard, that I was looking into Space,  
• An Everywhere unclosed in any place

But ever Somewhere, going on and on  
 On, into Nowhere that had never gone.  
 This caused the visions that I seemed to see  
 Streamings of fire flying over me  
 Rings and ellipses hurtling in their flame  
 A fire and beauty endlessly the same  
 Part of me, surely, and myself a part  
 (Perhaps) of it; a paint-dot in an art.

Then, from a time which happiness made tense,  
 Come memories of persons long gone hence:  
 A coachman pulling-up, to bid me mark  
 The mad-dog frenzy of a fox's bark:  
 An old man pointing where three vipers rose:  
 "They hissed at me, all standing on their toes".  
 Then, a most gentle friend, with silver hair,  
 At lunch, falling asleep upon her chair.  
 A little yellow chicken lying dead:  
 And then a gate through which a trackway led  
 Beside an apple-orchard to a boat  
 Wherein my pilgrim self went first afloat.

Great floods were out; the hedges in black lines  
 Wallowed like water-snakes with bony spines,  
 Within the channel, full of swirl in swill,  
 A six-mile current romped towards the mill.  
 I was then three; two half-remembered men  
 Launched with me forth and brought me back agen,  
 But half a century later, I was told  
 What risks beset us in that bliss of old.  
 The boat was crazy, like her merry crew,  
 And many drowned men's deaths that mill-race knew.  
 Life, looking on her lamb, postponed the slaughter  
 And stamped within my soul delight in water.

Beauty of water gave delight again:—  
 The earth was shining after winter rain,  
 Each little brook was shouting in its run  
 Each meadow was a jewel in the sun,  
 And in a midmost grass a foot-high fount  
 Throbbled and uptumbled its collapsing mount  
 Wonder, dissolved, resolved, upspringing, sped,  
 Beauty, yet never aught, yet never dead.

Terror of water followed, when I saw  
 The eddies of a flood in torrent draw  
 The wreckage under, as though hands were there  
 Hands, and the will to make a boy beware.  
 Even in summer when the pools were clear  
 The quiet depth was brooded-on by fear,  
 To be within its power was to die,  
 For all its still, reflected earth and sky.

But exquisite delight my spirit took  
 In many a roadside—many a meadow-brook,  
 One above all so beautiful a thing  
 I thought God had a cottage at its spring.  
 And by another once a partridge came  
 With chicks which I could stroke, they were so tame  
 Quick, pecking, peering, all the mottled clutch  
 Bright-eyed, unfearing, exquisite to touch.

One other water blessed me with her grace,  
 A deep, calm quiet in a sunny place,  
 Where yellow flags grew tall and reeds grew gray  
 As though all time would be a summer day.  
 Sometimes a ring would spread as a fish rose  
 Then, the ring spent, placidity would close,  
 A skating fly might skim, a shadow flit  
 As some exulting swallow stooped at it,  
 But save for these, no other aim there was  
 Than to be beauty and beauty's looking-glass.

Near by, within a little field there grew  
 Clover, dim white, with blushes glowing through,  
 Great-headed clover, exquisitely sweet,  
 Wherein the bees went fumbling for their meat  
 Wonder, that kept in poise life's dual thrust,  
 To red, to white, while being only dust.

*Clover*

Other intense delights of those glad hours  
 Were scents and colours of the fruits and flowers,  
 The perfume in the tulip's waxen shell  
 Whence the May Moon-Queen gathers hydromel;  
 The pale blue chicory, with scrubby stalk,  
 • (Uncommon there, that lover of the chalk),

*The  
Flon*

And under dark green leaves, the first deep red  
 June strawberry with yellow speckles spread,  
 Each of the three too exquisite a prey  
 For hand to gather, save to give away,  
 For to a prodigal, the joy of living  
 Is not in having for oneself but giving,  
 For life is emptiness and Nature bare  
 Lacking the friend to have the larger share.

Mine, was a little town of ancient grace,  
 A long street widened at a market-place,  
 Crossed, in its length, by two transversal ways  
 Doubtless the course of brooks in early days.  
 Within the width, a market-building stood  
 Propped upon weathered quarres of chestnut-wood.  
 In near-by lanes, where rotting tan-pits stank,  
 Prince Rupert's horse had broken Massey's rank  
 And sent him flying, in our Civil War;  
 Men found the bullets still, in beam and door.  
 Rude, leaden lumps, last relics to survive  
 The agony and rage of men alive.

The little town was pleasant to the sight,  
 Fair, with half-timbered houses, black and white,  
 Shops, taverns, traffic, market, in the street,  
 And cobbled paving, painful to the feet.  
 Slowly, I came to know it, but at first  
 Judged of it only by its best and worst.

Two things beyond all others were the best;  
 Someone was felling timber in the west,  
 And daily up the Bye Street timber-waggon  
 Dragged the chained scaly butts like slaughtered dragons.  
 It was delight to see those timber-teams  
 The iron of their shag-hoofs striking gleams,  
 Their brasses bright, their mighty crests at strain,  
 With crack of whip-shot coming up the lane,  
 And where the narrow lane-end opened wide  
 The corded carter ran ahead to guide  
 Seizing the leading horse, who tossed his head  
 With jingle and snort, disdaining to be led.  
 Surely, the summit of man's glory was

To govern mighty horses hung with brass,  
And bear a plaited lash with which to stun  
The ear with whip-cracks sudden as a gun.

Life's other glory topped the church's spire,  
A golden vane surveying half the shire,  
A weather-cock serene in the assails  
Of tree-upsetting, ship-destroying gales.  
Pinnaced, plumey, lonely, there he shone,  
Swinging to shifts, but never moving on,  
Braving, perhaps, the blasts that were to be  
Death to the *Captain* and *Eurydice*.  
Lofty as any clipper's skysail truck,  
Steadfast as life, as certainless as luck,  
Seeing him swinging to the wester's drive  
I ever thought that golden bird alive.

Almost at once, a third delight, as great,  
Came, bringing bliss to my enchanted state:—  
The horse-canal, with barges passing by  
Bursting the blue of the reflected sky,  
Going from towns unknown to quays unconned,  
From sunrise to the sunset and beyond.  
Whenever happy fortune let me see  
Those barges passing, it was bliss to me.

The barges were blunt-ended tanks,  
With rub-strakes polished by the banks,  
And bearing dingy freight for fee,  
But, oh, when they were close to me,  
At locks, when, just beneath my eyes  
The dreadful eddies made them rise,  
When, within touch, I looked into  
The darling cabin of the crew  
The little house with bunks and stove  
For her who steered and him who drove  
An, then, to me, each barge became  
A fairyland of coloured flame.

Daily I saw them as they <sup>3</sup>crawled  
Behind the ribby horse that hauled;  
The slug-horse, day-long keeping pace,

Blowing his nose-bag in his face;  
 Tauting his line so iron-hard  
 It grooved the bridges' arches' guard,  
 With riven scorings cutted sleek  
 Smooth as a little baby's cheek;  
 There, on the path, with pipe or ballad,  
 The captain looked for eggs or salad,  
 Or whittled clothes-pegs, or with hand  
 Polished a holly-plant with sand.  
 V-like the spreading ripples veered  
 A woman with long earrings steered  
 An old sun-bonnet on her head,  
 No log, no latitude, no lead,  
 Nothing but keeping the same pace  
 From loading-wharf to mooring-place.  
 Daily, I saw them pass me by,  
 Just horse and movement to the eye,  
 A plodding horse, a gliding sheer,  
 With chimney-smokings blowing clear,

And colour where the helmsman leant  
 Against the tiller as she went.

Next to these dear delights, I knew  
 And loved, my daily western view:—  
 Two fields to the canal, and then  
 A farm, a mill, and fields agen,  
 A wood, with yew-trees almost black;  
 A bridge with railways on its back;  
 A line of poplar-trees, a white  
 Steep, hilly roadway just in sight;  
 A hill, of which the stories told  
 That it had moved in days of old,  
 Glid for two days, church, manor, village,  
 Pump, barton, tavern, crop and tillage.  
 Beyond this Wonder, distant, dim,  
 My western vision had its rim,  
 And yet, when western skies were clear,  
 The distance hard, and rain was near,  
 A blueness shewed against the sky,  
 The Welsh Black Mountains, beyond Wye.

All of this westward soil was red as meat,  
The blood of life to roses, corn and neat;  
A wine of life, from apple and from pear,  
Gushed each September in the orchards there;  
Red, white-faced cattle browsed there, matched by none,  
Visible bread grew golden in the sun.  
Near timbered barns the red brick farmsteads stood,  
Each with an oast house like a Welsh crone's hood;  
Each floated over by the shifting flight  
Of countless pigeons flashing dark and white;  
Each glad with cockcrow, and the laugh of duckling,  
The turkies gobbling and the fantails ruckling;  
Each tented thick about with builded stacks  
Waiting the droning thresher and the sacks;  
Each bean-rick dark beneath a strawy dome,  
Each moping haystack sweet as honeycomb,  
Cut sometimes with the knife for present use,  
So honeyful the touch expected juice.  
There on the levelled cut the cat would drowse  
Forgetting dread of dog and hope of mouse,  
Curled on the fragrant bed with hidden claws,  
Her neat wee nose just shewing beneath paws  
While the hot summer's many noises blurred  
Into one warm and self-approving word.  
There the cat slept, and on his kennel's chain  
The house-dog dreamed of catching rats again,  
Till towards sunset when with splash and moo  
The funeral-footed cows to milking drew,  
And all the yard was filled with patient eyes,  
Great, licking tongues, and tail-tips swishing flies.

Though many pictures of the farms remain,  
Of hopyards, apple-orchards, grass and grain,  
Of many-coloured poultry harvesting,  
And tumbler-pigeons dropping on the wing,  
Yet this, of cows returning before dusk,  
Smelling of hay and honeycomb and musk,  
Strawberry-coloured, or the white and red  
Great-bodied cattle that my county bred,  
Is still the constant picture, and the chief,  
Framed in bare boughs, in buddings, and in leaf.



## THE LAND WORKERS

AND then, in all those pleasant lands  
I used to see the farming-hands.  
I need but shut my eyes, and fast  
There come the pictures of the past,  
Of men and women, long-since dead,  
Who battled with the Earth for bread  
(A daily bread they might but taste)  
For Folly and his doll to waste.

And first, the whetstones making writhe  
The screaming anguish of the scythe;  
The hayfield, the moon-daisy-stelled,  
Where the wet frog his hoppage held,  
Where the just-blushing opal clover  
Had the king bumble-bee for lover,  
And many a blunt-tailed rusty mouse  
Piped treble in his grassy house.

There at the swinging edges' scathe  
The summer flowers fell in swathe;  
Daisy and ragged-robin drooped  
Then tumbled, as the sharpness swooped.  
A field-long grassy dragon snaked  
Behind the scythes, where women raked;  
And who, that looked on these, forgets  
Their flapping lilac sun-bonnets?

Then, who forgets the bristled corn  
When sloes are blue among the thorn?  
The harvest-reapers stretched for luncheon  
About the wooden cider-puncheon,  
Backed on the sunburnt golden stooks  
New-cutted by the fagging-hooks.  
(For sickles did the reaping then  
In those old days, when men were men.)

Each year the blue September comes  
With wasps all sugar-drunk, in plums,  
And crackling partridge-stubble twined  
With trumpet-flowered bedewind.  
But those old harvesters uncouth  
Are gone out of my world with youth,  
Gone like the corn-crake, whose harsh word  
So darling then is now not heard.

Then, like to maypoles set in lines,  
The hopyards of the English vines:  
The cribs, wherein I picked for'hours  
The resined, flakey, pungent flowers,  
Whose gummage stained my fingers brown:  
Then . . . all those rascallies from town,  
The hoppers, cribbing deep, with hooting  
New-comers, till they paid their footing,  
Or crouching at the twilit meuse  
Setting the brass hair-wire noose  
That made the wide-eyed rabbit choke.  
Or slinking quietly as smoke  
Along the hedge till stick could reach  
Apron or pinner set to bleach;  
Or sudden hand could grab the wing  
Of pullet come a-harvesting.  
Or, at the inns on market-nights  
Rousing the moon with songs and fights.  
Where are they, thefts and songs and feuds?  
The inns are shut and the moon broods  
'These mad leaves that the man-tree bears  
Are soon wisps blowing down the airs.'

With these, I well remember still  
That miracle of strength and skill  
The Cowman, who, with hook and heed,  
Let forth the grim red bull to breed,  
A ton of power surging by  
With seven devils in his eye,  
Lurching, like some ninth fatal wave  
That a mad moon's compelling drave,  
His soul a strength of hell in smoulder  
The earthquake heaving in his shoulder,

His malice slanting from his look,  
 Yet ringed by Man and held by hook.  
 Man daunted him to please his Wife;  
 So Man will someday conquer Life.

Then, the grave man, who used to guide  
 The shire-stallion to his bride:  
 The stallion stalking, proud as Spain,  
 With ribbons in his tail and mane,  
 (It took two hours' work to do  
 That plaiting, red and white and blue.)  
 His fetlocks combed, his roller trim,  
 And that grave men in charge of him,  
 The artist shewing forth his ware,  
 The might surmounted and made fair.

Then, more September memories  
 Of apples glowing on the trees,  
 Of men on ladders in the sun  
 Gathering apples by the ton,  
 Of heaps of red-fleshed cider-fruit  
 Wasp-pestered at each apple root  
 And smell of pommace warm in air  
 From cider-presses everywhere.

Then, the farm-carters, who could lash  
 The still air like a musket-crash,  
 Who strode ahead of waggons talking  
 To horses jingling in their stalking  
 From brasses at their collars hung.  
 The horses understood the tongue,  
 Of which Phoenician fragments stay  
 Still, in my memory today:—  
 "ZAKEEYA DAHBI WOOTAH STAH".

Under the earth those heroes are;  
 Those Englishmen, slow, stubborn, kind,  
 Farm-labourers, time out of mind,  
 Who, with odd gurgles, growls and clicks,  
 Stacked the slain Summer into ricks  
 Who tamed the great beasts' strength, and beat  
 Earth's red rebellious clay to meat.

Each full of fancies, dark and odd  
From when the devil had been god,  
Knowing the rite, with seed or muck,  
Without which "T'woulden have no luck":  
Knowing how fatal 'twas to plough  
Ere Earth and Heaven had said "Now";  
And how the blood of bird or mouse  
Would bring the crop or guard the house;  
And how, unless you turned the penny,  
The new moon rode you with her meyny.  
Though Night's old terrors stayed, the Earth  
Kept in them still the seeds of mirth,  
Shrivelled, yet living, from a time  
Before wild manhood became crime.

All helped the children to make gay  
A maypole for the First of May,  
For glory of the fragrant, green  
Delightful Spring, the Meadow Queen;  
All sang, (and after sixty years  
The singing lingers in my ears)  
From waggon-tops, while bearing back  
The end of harvest to the stack;  
The young men, with their swords, would dance  
Our pagan blood's inheritance,  
Or, strangely dressed, with helms and swords,  
And uncouth, half-forgotten words,  
(And bladders upon sticks, to beat  
Spectators back) in market street  
Would act that age-old play of Corn  
Cut down by Death and then re-born.  
And other touching graces stayed  
From times ere pageant had decayed

For sometimes still, when children died,  
Women in white, each like a bride,  
Would bear the body to its rest.  
And when men died all did their best  
To set a feast, however poor.  
Of wine and sweetmeats at the door  
Though God's recording angels knew  
That in their life-times feasts were few.

I know, indeed, I knew of yore,  
The bitter cross those heroes bore.  
The pastoral those fellows played  
Was piped beneath no beech-tree shade,  
But fought by manhood grinded bare  
Against starvation and despair.

What were they like to look at, say,  
Those men who fed us yesterday?  
Unlike us, clothing, gait and face,  
That uncouth, ancient British race.  
Their coats, cut in the antique shear,  
Had stood the weather many a year,  
With baggy pockets each a bin  
To hide the wired rabbit in.  
Brown corduroy their trews would be  
Gartered with straps below the knee.  
Their boots on stone struck sparks like steels  
From iron on their soles and heels.  
The oldest men still daily wore  
The smocks of centuries before,  
Each fairly needled on the chest  
By loving hands long since gone west.  
Alas, its sixty years by clock  
Since last I saw a man in smock.

Then, for their gait, their joints, sans oil,  
All bent, from having stooped at toil,  
Moved with a bow-legged shamble, slow  
As the led bull or horse would go.  
Since most had started work at seven  
They had not quite the grace of Heaven.

Then, for their looks:—their air, their tinct,  
(Like all that caused them) are extinct;  
But in old photographs I see  
Those lost leaves of the English tree,  
And know, from seeing them, why Spain  
That came to smite ran home again,  
And why, at last, man's greed and knavery  
Were forced to stop the trade of slavery.

Who built the churches in the long ago,  
And will again, when greed and folly go,  
When beauty shines again through blood and bone  
And wretched man again makes her his own.

Last of the three, a woman, somewhat frail,  
Stunted, and slightly lame, and ever pale,  
Yet sturdy ever, to bear many an ache  
And many an anguish for devotion's sake;  
Not to be noticed, save by searching eyes  
Who seek a heart that quiet has kept wise.  
Untaught and humble, she had stumbled on  
Hoping for light till something in her shone.  
From childhood skilled in simple country things  
Possets for fevers, poultices for stings;  
Clever at freeing ducklings from the shell;  
Her kitchen-garden tended more than well  
Her cottage spotless, free from mouse and moth  
Her pride, her china and her tablecloth.  
Her very life a gift or offered loan  
To all whose need was greater than her own.  
Her rule, the Scriptures, out of which she spelled  
Counsel and comfort on the course she held.

Though I was sheltered, yet, when life began,  
I learned that men are terrible to man.  
I never crossed the town without the sight  
Of withered children suffering from blight,  
Of women's heads, like skull-bones, under shawls,  
Of drunkards staggering with caterwauls,  
And starving groups in rags, with boots unsoled,  
Blear-eyed, and singing ballads in the cold.  
I saw the filthy alleys, close and dark,  
Where few could read or write, but made their mark,  
Where men and women lived and died in tetter,  
So little human that the dogs were better.

South-westward, as I heard, there lay  
Old wharves of darkness tucked away,  
Black courtyards thick with ancient inns  
Kept by the Seven Deadly Sins.

My elders said, This was the port  
Whereto the bargemen made resort.  
I never trod those lanes, nor saw  
The seven breakers of the law,  
Only their washing hung from lines  
And dingy, painted, swinging signs,  
And empty alleys with none stirring  
Save possibly a black cat purring,  
Doubtless a cat with Satan's mark  
Who rode a broomstick after dark.

Ah, after dark, when bound for bed,  
What images were in my head  
Of lamplight in those secret houses  
And songs and fiddles and carouses  
And ear-ringed bargemen sipping rum  
Defying death and kingdom come,  
Telling the marvels of the seas  
From Maelstrom to the Ramireez.  
For who could doubt those swarthy men  
Knew Tenedos and Darien,  
Had heard the Goan bells and sinned  
In Trapalanda and Melind,  
And now the Sins themselves, in red,  
Were with them as I went to bed.  
O, how I longed for but one peep  
Before the swift annulling sleep.

Though drink and poverty and crime  
Poisoned those alleys of old time,  
Where wickedness gave little truce,  
I knew that energy was loose;  
Energy, too, made sudden storms  
In farmers' fields in other forms,  
For those whose wits were gathering wool  
Would often come upon a bull,  
And tales of bulls from every side  
Kept little children terrified.  
The wolf that scared Red Ridinghood  
Could scare less than a red bull could.

From almost every farm, a dreadful tale  
Of what a bull had done, made children quail:  
How the bull, wrenching, turned upon his lord  
Then taking him to drink, and knelt, and gored:  
How the bull, loose in meadow, chased and tossed  
A little boy, who lived, (with reason lost).  
How one, pursued across a field, was torn:  
"The bull had tatters of him on his horn".  
And other some, who in extreme despair  
Just reached the tree, and panted, dodging there.

Too well, a little child imagined them,  
Seeing the great horns coming round the stem;  
Hearing the great side brushing round the tree,  
Knowing the hunted fox's agony,  
But others, leaping at a branch, had just  
Caught, and swung clear above the antler thrust,  
But huddled in the branches had to stay  
Watched by the red beast's malice all the day.  
Watching him horn the tree-bark into grooves,  
And snorting try to clamber with his hooves,  
Then seeming to go graze, but watching still  
The quarry treed that was to be the kill.  
That land's imagination was filled full,  
And wisely so, with terror of the bull  
And none who crossed a field was ever free  
From dreadful wonder where the bull might be.

Ah, with what mixed adventure and alarm  
I crept to see a bull upon a farm.  
In the hot June, I crept away alone,  
I passed the duckpond and the upping-stone,  
I reached the mighty barn's vast waggon door,  
And, scared though eager, entered to explore.

Dim as an abbey's nave the barton lay,  
Its cobwebbed brickwork stuck with scraps of hay,  
Its rafters quick with flitting of the birds,  
Arrowing swallows crying darting words;  
The yellow wreck of an old waggon stood,  
Its rusty iron coming from its wood,



Further along, in line, were sunlit stalls,  
 The horses gone, old harness on the walls.  
 The little wrens went up the wooden side,  
 Stall after stall, their sudden peckings pried.

I wandered down the stable, stall by stall,  
 It was all vast and I was very small,  
 And still, the hurrying swallows squealed and sped  
 Athwart the sunbeams up into their bed.  
 At the barn's end, a wooden ladder hove  
 Up, through a hatchway, to a loft above,  
 And climbing this, I saw that sunlight shone  
 Along a hayloft stretching on and on,  
 Cluttered with hay and speckled with a draff  
 Left by the cutters when they chopped the chaff.

I stepped along that loft of unknown dangers  
 I looked down hay-slides into cattle-mangers,  
 I heard the pigeons chuckling on the roof,  
 And saw a gray cat shyly glide aloof,  
 And quaked, lest from behind me, up the stair,  
 A tip-toe bull should catch me unaware,  
 With sudden thunder charging to disjoint  
 My trembling meat upon his piker point,  
 Yet, none the less, my spirit said "Explore. . . .  
 See, try, and know the things unknown before".

Then, at the final shoot, I saw below,  
 Alive, close-to, the thing I dreaded so;  
 There, stamping straw, alone, within his cell,  
 The thunder-shouldered felon lowered fell,  
 A cringle in his snout to lead him by  
 And smoulders of hell-fire in his eye.  
 All weight, he seemed, yet, when I saw him shift,  
 His muscles rippled and his soul was swift,  
 Seeing his evil prisoned thus, I knew  
 For the first time, the wonder man can do. . . .  
 Man from the first had faced this peril close,  
 Had penned him in, and ringed him through the nose.  
 So, can Man shackle all the plagues that kill  
 And wars that slaughter, if he have the will.

Symbol of fruitfulness whose juices yield  
 The countless meat and butter in the field;  
 Symbol of weight, of strength, of lusty thighs,  
 Of everything ungentle and unwise;  
 Symbol supreme of power without sense,  
 Of small caprices mixed with much offence;  
 Image of crowds and what a crowd exalts,  
 A thing supremely dowered with its faults;  
 Image of stupid man with front of horn  
 Lowered to thrust at every wisdom born;  
 Dull enemy forever in a wrath  
 Loose in the field where wisdom seeks a path;  
 Father of calves, whom manhood put in pen  
 Eternal enemy and test of men;

Curly cow-conqueror, whom dolt and dunce  
 Pictured and praised as England's image once;  
 Light's living foe in daily recognition  
 As mob, as war office, as politician,  
 As anything that heaves opposing mass  
 Against the One who might make wisdom pass;  
 As anything whose bellow moves the herd  
 Against a still small voice speaking the word;  
 Terror of children, but an image still  
 Of what man conquers if he have the will,  
 Leviathan, man-guided by a hook.  
 To death by axe and burial through a cook.

Though dread of bull was put to rout  
 More terrors kept the soul in doubt,  
 This was the worst of these annoyances:  
 That gipsies kidnapped little boys.  
 Though laws and charities forbid,  
 I was assured, that gipsies did:  
 They lured, or snared the boy with noose,  
 They browned his skin with walnut juice,  
 And sold him to a life of pain;  
 He never saw his home again.

I was most solemnly besought  
 To ponder this that Minnie taught,

Never to trust, never to take  
The gipsy's promises or cake,  
Though cake were iced and promise fair  
Alike, they led into despair.  
For half a dozen years I knew  
A terror of the gipsy crew.  
And there were many gipsies then  
Dark, passionate, romantic men;  
Oh, many campments did I see  
Of gipsies surely come for me,  
With little fires, felted tents,  
Lean ponies wrenching at the bents,  
Old, earringed women, smoking clays,  
Bold, black-eyed girls with eyes in blaze,  
And coats, whose buttons, guinea-gold,  
Were blood-money from children sold.  
Perhaps, two centuries before,  
Dark, human wolves had tapped at door,  
Had lured the children forth with tales,  
To ships that waited under sails  
To bear them west-away, to sell.  
The terror left had lasted well.  
Minnie believed it; I believed.

A certain tree its darkness heaved  
Not far away, a straggly fir.  
It seemed the devil's minister.  
Near it, a house, in evening light,  
Looked like a mouth inclined to bite;  
And further off, an oast-house stood,  
A giantess in witch's hood;  
These three, the gipsies and the bulls,  
And waterfalls and water-pools,  
Would always set my pulses quick  
And sometimes terrify me sick.  
Or from beneath my bed, the smile  
So jagged, of the crocodile;  
Or from within my bed the claw  
Of tigers fond of children raw.  
These were my dreads, and skulls that grinned  
From nightmares trotting on the wind.

I do not know the day, the month, the year:  
It was a green time, when the sky was clear;  
I was then five or six, in open air,  
When suddenly a doorway opened there.  
An ecstasy discovered that my mind  
Had every wonder that I wished to find,  
Limitless strength, to see and to create,  
A wealth of phantasy, past telling great,  
Power to call at will, to see and sway  
Peoples and creatures infinitely gay,  
Things in perfection, landscapes, forests, seas,  
And I, who summoned, king of all of these,  
King of a world to enter when I chose,  
(O desert spring, O rock-delighting rose).

Instantly then, I summoned, to my joy  
The tiny people suited to a boy,  
A fairy people, who, in daily dreams  
Provisioned ships, and sailed, exploring streams,  
Familiar streams, but past the points I knew,  
Where undreamed fruits and unseen flowers grew,  
Where, in some bay, they purchased priceless things,  
Little Green Hairstreaks', Purple Emperors' wings,  
Crest feathers plucked at night by Indian men  
Scarlet from woodpecker, or gold from wren,  
Or blue-green flash, or golden-tawny gleam  
Dropped by the 'fisher skimming down the stream.

Two barren fields I knew,  
Where lonely oak-trees grew;  
Pale fields, in places rushed  
Where trembling trickles gushed;  
Poor pastures, with thin bent  
O'er which the peewit went,  
And small snipe, tumbling after,  
Cackled uncanny laughter.  
Their loneliness was such  
Few people went there much  
Their cupboard was so bare  
No cattle fattened there,  
But, oh, to me, to me,  
What holy mystery.

Still, after sixty years  
Their quiet reappears  
Three oaks together; three  
Like islands in the sea,

A shallow sea of grass  
Wherein a wonder was  
A ring, which feet unseen  
Had danced to darker green  
Almost as dark as yew,  
Or foot-prints among dew.  
Whose feet had glittered there  
When the bright Moon was bare?  
What had the white owl known  
Floating on wind alone  
When midnight's bee-bell-drone  
Wandered like sound-seed sown  
And tense fox lifted pad?  
A life lighter than ours  
A life gayer than flowers,  
A life not told by hours  
But by things glad.

Sometimes, on sunny afternoons, I heard  
A horn in cry, and hoofs a-tittup stirred,  
The coach-in-four was coming with the mail.  
At trumpet heard, all hurried to give hail;  
At easy speed, the four-in-hand appears  
The coachman's eyes upon his leaders' ears,  
Each horse a special soul, yet, there, a team  
With chink of chain, old leather-grunt, and steam,  
With foam-fleck rubbing darkness upon skin,  
The guard at fanfare on his yard of tin,  
Then the swift lash, the coachman's sudden cry  
The impulse on, and then, the thunder by.

As the coach neared to the appointed place  
The guard returned the trumpet to its case,  
Picked up his postal packs and pitched them straight  
For clever hands to catch at door and gate  
Then sent another flourish laughing gay;  
The dust drew by; the hoofs clattered away;

Breathless the horn, now; dead the four-in-hand.  
Life's very pulse once throughout English land.

Another post went out in leather sack,  
Borne by a lad upon a pony back.  
He rode to quiets never passed by coach  
And blew a postman's horn at his approach.  
He came to homes whose dwellers hardly knew  
Railways or steam or aught since Waterloo.

Often in tenser times when light was clear  
And coming storm made distant noises near,  
Then from the western woods the horn-note stirred  
The sunset spoke as through the Phoenix bird.

From March till June, beyond the ash-pole-copse,  
A rookery called among the elm-tree-tops,  
Harsh, sweet and dear their calling; now and then  
At instants, strangely like the speech of men.  
One quiet evening, all the rooks in crowd  
Swarmed in excitement, more than ever loud.  
Somebody said, "A rook is being tried.  
Tomorrow, we shall see what they decide".

Next day, upon a stump above the pool  
I saw the wisdom of the assembled fool:  
An outlawed rook moped lonely, nearly dead,  
Outcast by that black senate overhead.  
"Outcast, for being a rogue" somebody said.

I was less sure in judgment, even then.  
Rooks may have light, like wisdom among men.  
Had wisdom brought the vengeance of the herd,  
Man's cross or hemlock fitted to a bird?

All day, I watched that brother in disgrace;  
I knew the pride and misery of his case.  
He knew my sympathy, but also knew  
For all its warmth, its impotence to do.

Still, after sixty years, I see again  
That blue-black huddled thing of pride and pain,

Outcast, abandoned, without kind or friend,  
 Finished with life and yet denied an end,  
 And still I wonder for what taint or doubt  
 Or crime or truth its fellows cast it out.  
 Those looking at it, said, "He is not sick.  
 His plumes are glossy, and his eyes are quick".  
 Even with men, an outlawry is rare,  
 Crime does not make the outcast anywhere.  
 Crime is too common, crime has friends and kin,  
 Outlawry comes when wisdom is the sin.

And yet what wisdom had that bird upheld?  
 Against what theme had his sense rebelled?  
 He had denied no creed, condemned no church;  
 Found no plague's causes after long research;  
 Exposed no fraud nor robbery of trade  
 By which death throve and money might be made;  
 Arraigned no office destitute of sense  
 For doing nothing at immense expense;  
 Branded no sport as beastly cruelty;  
 Taxed no one's drunkenness as gluttony;  
 Impeached no cabinet for years of harms,  
 Inviting war, yet not providing arms;  
 Denounced no statesman for an idiot course,  
 Invoking platitude to counter force;  
 Practised no art, nor read nor written book,  
 Only been rook, with something not of rook.  
 There with his pride about him for his shroud  
 He gripped his stump, awaiting death uncowed.

So the rook died by vote of rooky mind.  
 Man soon outdid the rooks in being unkind.

There was an old man whom I used to see  
 Sunning outside a cottage by the lane;  
 He wore the smock-frock of the antique cut  
 Gathered at chest with cunning needlery;  
 His kin were dead; he could not work again;  
 He waited, till the closing door was shut.  
 Old as the Flood I thought him, for I knew  
 That he had helped ring bells for Waterloo.

His one delight in waiting for the end  
Was looking at the prospect of the vale,  
The cornfields he had reaped when he was hale;  
And many an oast-house, many a cider-press  
And many a meadow he had helped to tend  
Before old age had made his fingers pale;  
After such toil, to sit and see the sun  
Was no outrageous thank for such an one.

But it was grudged him; he was bidden go  
Forth from his sunny cot to smells and dins  
In nasty darknesses in kennel row  
Down by the coal-wharf and the deadly sins.  
I know not who had made this evil be. . . .  
But no-one stirred, and this was hell to me.

I raged against intolerable wrong  
Why should a wonder among sterling men  
Be driven, after toiling nobly long,  
To die thus doglike in a stinking den?  
Why had no mercy screened him from the hurt?  
In a few weeks, he died amid the dirt.

And in a few weeks more, came Sarah's case  
A kind old woman in infirmity  
Sick unto death, and yet denied a grace  
And sent into the workhouse ward to die,  
Into the "house" against which all her pride  
Rebelled in bleakest anguish till she died.

The cruelty of this inhuman deed  
To one as loving kind as summer earth,  
Made my young heart for very pity bleed  
Whose life deserved, were Sarah's nothing worth?  
Yet people grudged the pennies to provide  
That old sick soul with shelter till she died.

Why such large sin, so little penny saved?  
What was her need, but shelter for her bed,  
And any anodyne her sickness craved,  
A little water and a little bread?  
The whole could be bought thrice for twenty pound,  
(And then bought dear) but still, it was not found.



So kindest Sarah's spirit passed in grief,  
Killed by the bitter gruel of "relief"  
In earth's unkindness and with outraged pride  
Her misery beset her till she died.  
"I was too young," they said, "to understand . . .  
Not ours to question what the Lord has planned."  
Surely, nor mine, but life had let me see  
How cruel, man, how bitter, age, may be,  
How savage, life, when hearts have ceased to feel,  
When living love no longer turns the wheel,  
When to the helpless left to die alone  
The heart of sawdust gives the gift of stone.

Then I perceived, that people had a dread  
That untaught should be taught, and starving fed.  
They were afraid, lest taught and fed should rise  
Not on the horrors of their miseries,  
Not on their rags, their drunkenness and itch,  
Their lice and ignorance, but on the rich.  
This common dread amid the general dark  
Was social conscience's expiring spark.

Then, though the drunkards daily darkened lives,  
Starving the children sick, and beating wives,  
Making a dirty hell within the den  
That made the castle of such Englishmen,  
Yet all the poisons of their making mad,  
Were sold like bread, and with less trouble had.  
Why raging madness should be made and sold  
Perplexed my childish brain in days of old  
But someone said that but for selling drink  
Our ship of state would very swiftly sink,  
Drink-tax, that built the fleet that rules the waves  
Drink-tax alone made Britons never slaves.  
Therefore, to sell or buy drink, was to be  
Partner in England's impulse to be free . . .  
This seemed absurd, but on the other hand  
Being a child, I could not understand.

●

Indeed, I sadly gathered as I grew  
That human life was odder than I knew,

How odd a measure, to how sad a tune,  
I knew not then, but was to gather soon.  
But still, already, in those earliest days  
Seeing the unfed children in the ways  
I longed to help, and to my misery heard  
That help meant money, more than will and word,  
And, yet more awful, texts from iron mind  
Forbade to change what Providence designed.  
And wicked children sinned, to think they knew  
Better than age, what would or wouldn't do.

Two different races trod the English turf,  
The (so-called) Norman, and the (not called) serf.  
I saw the rich, like tree-twigs in the light,  
The poor, like tree-roots buried in the night.  
Uncouthly, uncomplainingly, they mined  
To send up sap until the twigs had dined.  
The twigs in comfort in the sun and air  
Proclaimed that things were perfect as they were  
That if the roots were muddy, that must be. . . .  
Roots must be under mud to grow the tree;  
Let roots be muddy and in darkness dig  
Let singing-birds and sunlight come to twig.

The present practice was too good to alter  
And those who spoke of change deserved a halter.  
Though but a little boy, I argued, then,  
That roots and twigs alike were mortal men,  
And how shall mortal man in comfort dwell  
Seeing his brother mortal shut in hell?

The land retained some ancient pageants still.  
Mothers still taught the now forgotten way  
To fasten flowers in pyramids of skill  
On sticks, for maypoles on the First of May.

With golden burberry and moonlit broom,  
The fragrant cowslip that the still-maid knows,  
Tulips and hyacinths and apple-bloom,  
And button-balls, they made the bravest shows.

With these, the maypole-bearers went in pride,  
And people mixed them rich milk-possets sweet,  
(The sillabubs) for maypole band and bride,  
And gave them pence, and plummy cakes to eat.

And Mummers went at Christmas, with their play,  
With Mrs. Vinney who revived the dead;  
Men danced a sword-dance still, not far away,  
At ploughings still, a mouse's blood was shed.

Once in the year, the Foresters, in green,  
Marched through the town with banners and a band.  
Or circuses paraded, with their Queen,  
Drawn by pied horses on a golden stand.

But best of all, was the October Fair  
When in the market-place the beasts were cooped,  
And horses whirled to the steam-organ's blare,  
And many coloured swing-boats hove and swooped;

And shiny stalls were there of painted toys,  
Fairyland stalls, all brightly gardened round  
With life of man and beast, exciting noise,  
And paper zinnias stuck into the ground.

Ah, the October Fair, the hiring-day,  
The sunny day, when it could never rain,  
When bells were rung for sorrows put away,  
And men rejoiced for life begun again.

Abundant waters sprang below the hills,  
Many clear wells with cresses on their sills,  
Yet many cottagers were forced to bring  
Water a half-mile daily from the spring.  
I well remember Barbara the maiden  
Going that weary journey, water-laden,  
Bent under yoke and buckets, stepping small,  
Lest the bright, precious, lipping drink should fall  
She was a stalwart girl, not yet fifteen  
Bearing her household's honour, to keep clean.  
Twice daily she bore buckets to and fro  
From her hill-cottage to the well below.

Then back, along the lane, across a clay  
In plough or crop, at best a trodden way,  
Then up a pathless, steep, short slippery hill  
Each step perplexed with effort not to spill,  
And so to cottage in the tiny copse  
Of crab and hazel under fir-tree-tops.

Long afterwards, remembering her load,  
I climbed the hillock by the self-same road.  
It was so steep, that footholds had been made  
Cut in the pale hill smalmier by the spade,  
And climbing up by these, I thought the more  
Of Barbara and all the loads she bore.

Often, the moment's hero is acclaimed,  
A nation's noblest spirit never named.  
Spirits there are, who keep a sense of style  
Where one least lapse would finally defile,  
Who bear, like Barbara, a daily weight  
To keep their living bright and make it great,  
Who face the uphill drag, whose curse will lie  
As steep on every morrow till they die,  
Yet lift the load and climb, not knowing ease;  
Man in his midnight has his stars in these.

Often, I marvel at those folk of old,  
Those upright English poor, those hearts of gold,  
Who, through the hardship between birth and dying  
Held a true course and kept their colours flying.  
In all their work, so honest and so good,  
So full of kindness, thought, and hardihood,  
So seldom praised, and yet so often glad,  
So proud, to keep their children clean and clad,  
And somehow fed, for England still to be.  
Below, lay hell, above, stupidity,  
And in their hearts a star of the divine,  
That no cloud dims, that cannot cease to shine.  
Not shipping, cotton, iron, wools and coals  
Can make a nation's wealth, but splendid souls.

Under a hedgerow among elm-tree-roots  
And fallen branch and green cow-parsley shoots,  
A high red bank came sloping to the way  
All tangled green with periwinkle spray.  
Each living leaf like polished metal shone,  
Wetness and light were its caparison,  
And spangled in the jungle of the grove  
The long, five-petalled trumpets blossomed mauve,  
Mauve, for the winter, yet the blossoms knew  
That each sun's shining made them liker blue;  
Colour was coming back and summer winning  
The blackbird was in voice for spring beginning,  
And joy like sunlight through my being clove  
That spring was blackbird-wet-and-green-and-mauve.

While driving once, in some September dead,  
By thinning trees with apples gold and red,  
Crossing a bridge, we slowly climbed a hill  
A broad-wayed village exquisitely still,  
Still, as its breath of smoke whose impulse rose,  
Drowsed, as its dog with paw-supported nose,  
Tranced, by the peace and wealth that summer brings  
Into the quiet at the heart of things.  
Into a sleep so balmed from any ache  
That even the lifting swallow seemed mistake;  
Then, suddenly, with bang of bench and shout,  
With squeal of joy, the village school came out,  
And down the hill towards us rushed the troops  
Chasing with shrieks already leaping hoops,  
The boys in passing tugging at the hair  
(As at a bell-rope) in the pigtails there;

Ere freedom's ecstasy had ceased to shrill,  
Our two, slow, climbing horses topped the hill,  
Resumed their trot and left the scene behind;  
There memory failed, and I could never find  
That broad-wayed hamlet later when I sought.  
Those barns had been with many a harvest fraught,  
Those shouting children grown into old men  
When, by odd chance, I found the place agen,  
The bridge, the sunlit hill, the sunburnt scene,  
Fruit growing gold in leaves no longer green,

Some trees the same beginning to be bare  
The self-same place's same enchanted air  
Quiet unstirred by voice or dog or tool,  
Sleep in the home and holiday at school.

The mountain-turf was slippery with heat  
The wind on which the hawks were poisoning, came  
Fragrant with summer, thyme-and-bracken-sweet.

Cheery, the grass, with rockets of delight,  
Green people, prone, forever taking aim,  
And with a crackle shooting out of sight.

Gladly, they chirred, the heaven droned above,  
Blue, empty, save for hawks, yet ever thrilled  
By unseen Summer crooning like the dove.

Within the trench, the rampart and the sky  
Suddenly darkened on me, the air chilled  
Into a warning moaning going by.

Warning, it seemed, that someone not a friend  
Some wolf of wickedness that place had killed,  
Might suddenly come on me, round the bend.

But, ah, beyond, the giant fox-gloves grew,  
With white and purple bells expressly set  
For black-haired bumble-bees to fumble through

Bells, that the foxes, when the moonlight shone,  
When all the grasses glistened with the wet,  
Would slip their musky pads in, to try on.

In multitude they grew, purple and white  
Out-topping the sun-scented tender fern,  
And all the mountain's heave with brooks was bright;

Little, bright brooks, each twinkling from a cup  
Or rushy dip, in which I could discern  
A wrinkling clearness ever trembling up.

The summer now is ghost of summer then.  
I had possession in that afternoon  
Of all Earth, Sun and Water give to men.  
A summer now is echo of the tune.  
I cannot smell a sunburnt grass, nor hear  
The air's unnumbered, lifting, droning din,  
Now dying into distance and now near,  
A hill-sheep's cry or tinkled drinking-tin,  
Without a startling, that the past returns  
The hill, the brooks, the foxgloves and the ferns.

Though the new binders swept the cornfields clean,  
The farmers still gave gleaners leave to glean;  
The gleaners' stooks were husked and coarsely ground,  
Kneaded to cakes, and with hot embers browned.  
(Glowing wood-embers on the hearth-stones white  
Chirruped about by crickets all the night.)  
These little loaves held all the red earth's good,  
Earth's very life and marrow for man's food.  
Four things man needs, (the Spanish proverb tells)  
Good air, good bread, good water and good bells.  
However dark my growing dusk may fall  
Is night's affair, not mine; I've had them all.

## **THE EVERLASTING MERCY**



*Thy place is biggyd above the sterrys ceer,  
Noon erthely paleys wroubte in so statly wyse,  
Com on my freend, my brothir moost enteer,  
For the I offryd my blood in sacrifice.*

JOHN LYDGATE.

## THE EVERLASTING MERCY

FROM '41 to '51

I was my folk's contrary son;  
I bit my father's hand right through  
And broke my mother's heart in two.  
I sometimes go without my dinner  
Now that I know the times I've gi'n her.

From '51 to '61

I cut my teeth and took to fun.  
I learned what not to be afraid of  
And what stuff women's lips are made of;  
I learned with what a rosy feeling  
Good ale makes floors seem like the ceiling,  
And how the moon gives shiny light  
To lads as roll home singing by't.  
My blood did leap, my flesh did revel,  
Saul Kane was tokened to the devil.

From '61 to '67

I lived in disbelief of heaven  
I drunk, I fought, I poached, I whored,  
I did despite unto the Lord,  
I cursed, 'twould make a man look pale,  
And nineteen times I went to jail.  
Now, friends, observe and look upon me,  
Mark how the Lord took pity on me.

By Dead Man's Thorn, while setting wires,  
Who should come up but Billy Myers,  
A friend of mine, who used to be  
As black a sprig of hell as me,  
With whom I'd planned, to save encroachin',  
Which fields and coverts each should poach in.  
Now when he saw me set my snare,  
He tells me "Get to hell from there."

This field is mine," he says, "by right;  
If you poach here, there 'll be a fight.  
Out now," he says, "and leave your wire;  
It's mine."

"It ain't."

"You put."

"You liar."

"You closhy put."

"You bloody liar."

"This is my field."

"This is my wire."

"I'm ruler here."

"You ain't."

"I am."

"I'll fight you for it."

"Right, by damn.

Not now, though, I've a-sprained my thumb,  
We'll fight after the harvest hum.

And Silas Jones, that bookie wide,  
Will make a purse five pounds a side."

Those were the words, that was the place

By which God brought me into grace.

On Wood Top Field the peewits go  
Mewing and wheeling ever so;  
And like the shaking of a timbrel  
Cackles the laughter of the whimbrel.  
In the old quarry-pit they say  
Head-keeper Pike was made away.

He walks, head-keeper Pike, for harm,  
He taps the windows of the farm;  
The blood drips from his broken chin,  
He taps and begs to be let in.  
On Wood Top, nights, I've shaken to hark  
The peewits wambling in the dark  
Lest in the dark the old man might  
Creep up to me to beg a light.

But Wood Top grass is short and sweet  
And springy to a boxer's feet;  
At harvest hum the moon so bright  
Did shine on Wood Top for the fight.

When Bill was stopped down to his bends  
 I thought how long we two'd been friends,  
 And in my mind, about that wire,  
 I thought, "He's right, I am a liar.  
 As sure as skilly's made in prison  
 The right's poach that copse is his'n.  
 I'll have a crack to-night," thinks I.  
 "I'm fighting to defend a lie.  
 And this night's shiny evening's fun  
 Is worse than ought I ever done."  
 And making that way my heart bled so  
 I almost stepped to Bill and said so.  
 And now Bill's dead I would be glad  
 If I could only think I had.  
 But no, I let the thought away  
 For fear of what my friends would say.  
 They'd asked me, see? O Lord, the sin,  
 Done those fine things there 's money in.

The staves were drove, the ropes were hitched  
 Into the ring my hat I pitched.  
 My father faced the Squire's park  
 Just where the fir-trees make it dark;  
 The place where I begun poor Nell  
 Upon the woman's road to hell.  
 I thought of't, sitting in my corner  
 Ere the time-keep struck his warner  
 Ere brandy flasks, for fear of noise,  
 Had led out the time to us two boys).  
 And while my seconds chafed and gloved me  
 I thought of Nell's eyes when she loved me,  
 And wondered how my tot would end,  
 First Nell cast off and now my friend;  
 And in the moonlight dim and wan  
 I knew quite well my luck was gone;  
 And looking round I felt a spite  
 At all who'd come to see me fight;  
 At five and forty human faces  
 Flamed by drink and going to races,  
 Faces of men who'd never been  
 Merry or true or live or clean;

Who'd never felt the boxer's trim  
 Of brain divinely knit to limb,  
 Nor felt the whole live body go  
 One tingling health from top to toe;  
 Nor took a punch nor given a swing,  
 But just soaked deady round the ring  
 Until their brains and bloods were foul  
 Enough to make their throttles howl,  
 While we whom Jesus died to teach  
 Fought round on round, three minutes each.

And thinking that, you'll understand  
 I thought, "I'll go and take Bill's hand.  
 I'll up and say the fault was mine,  
 He sha'n't make play for these here swine,"  
 And then I thought that that was silly,  
 They'd think I was afraid of Billy:  
 They'd think (I thought it, God forgive me)  
 I funk'd the hiding Bill could give me.  
 And that thought made me mad and hot.  
 "Think that, will they? Well, they shall not.  
 They sha'n't think that. I will not. I'm  
 Damned if I will. I will not."

Timel

From the beginning of the bout  
 My luck was gone, my hand was out.  
 Right from the start Bill called the play,  
 But I was quick and kept away  
 Till the fourth round, when work got mixed,  
 And then I knew Bill had me fixed.  
 My hand was out, why, Heaven knows;  
 Bill punched me when and where he chose.  
 Through two more rounds we quartered wide  
 And all the time my hands seemed tied;  
 Bill punched me when and where he pleased.  
 The cheering from my backers ceased,  
 But every punch I heard a yell  
 Of "That's the style, Bill, give him hell."  
 No one for me, but Jimmy's light  
 "Straight left! Straight left!" and "Watch his right."

I don't know how a boxer goes  
 When all his body hums from blows;  
 I know I seemed to rock and spin,  
 I don't know how I saved my chin;  
 I know I thought my only friend  
 Was that clinked flask at each round's end  
 When my two seconds, Ed and Jimmy,  
 Had sixty seconds help to gimme.  
 But in the ninth, with pain and knocks  
 I stopped: I couldn't fight nor box.  
 Bill missed his swing, the light was tricky,  
 But I went down, and stayed down, dicky.  
 "Get up," cried Jim. I said, "I will."  
 Then all the gang yelled, "Out him, Bill.  
 Out him." Bill rushed . . . and Clink, Clink, Clink.  
 Timel and Jim's knee, and rum to drink.  
 And round the ring there ran a titter:  
 "Saved by the call, the bloody quitter."

They drove (a dodge that never fails)  
 A pin beneath my finger nails.  
 They poured what seemed a running beck  
 Of cold spring water down my neck;  
 Jim with a lancet quick as flies  
 Lowered the swellings round my eyes.  
 They sluiced my legs and fanned my face  
 Through all that blessed minute's grace;  
 They gave my calves a thorough kneading,  
 They salved my cuts and stopped the bleeding.  
 A gulp of liquor dulled the pain,  
 And then the two flasks clinked again.  
 Timel

There was Bill as grim as death.  
 He rushed, I clinched, to get more breath  
 And breath I got, though Billy bats  
 Some stinging short-arms in my slats.  
 And when we broke, as I foresaw,  
 He swung his right in for the jaw.  
 I stopped it on my shoulder bone,  
 And at the shock I heard Bill groan—  
 A little groan or moan or grunt  
 As though I'd hit his wind a bunt.

## THE EVERLASTING MERCY

At that, I clinched, and while we clinched,  
His old-time right-arm dig was flinched,  
And when we broke he hit me light  
As though he didn't trust his right,  
He flapped me somehow with his wrist  
As though he couldn't use his fist,  
And when he hit he winced with pain.  
I thought, "Your sprained thumb's crocked again."  
So I got strength and Bill gave ground,  
And that round was an easy round.

During the wait my Jimmy said,  
"What's making Billy fight so dead?  
He's all to pieces. Is he blown?"  
"His thumb's out."

"No? Then it's your own.  
It's all your own, but don't be rash—  
He's got the goods if you've got cash,  
And what one hand can do he'll do,  
Be careful this next round or two."

Time! There was Bill, and I felt sick  
That luck should play so mean a trick  
And give me leave to knock him out  
After he'd plainly won the bout.  
But by the way the man came at me  
He made it plain he meant to bat me;  
If you'd a seen the way he come  
You wouldn't think he'd crocked a thumb.  
With all his skill and all his might  
He clipped me dizzy left and right;  
The Lord knows what the effort cost,  
But he was mad to think he'd lost,  
And knowing nothing else could save him  
He didn't care what pain it gave him.  
He called the music and the dance  
For five rounds more and gave no chance.

Try to imagine if you can  
The kind of manhood in the man,  
And if you'd like to feel his pain,  
You sprain your thumb and hit the sprain,

And hit it hard, with all your power  
 On something hard for half an hour,  
 While someone thumps you black and blue,  
 And then you'll know what Billy knew.  
 Bill took that pain without a sound  
 Till half-way through the eighteenth round,  
 And then I sent him down and out,  
 And Silas said, "Kane wins the bout."

When Bill came to, you understand,  
 I ripped the mitten from my hand  
 And went across to ask Bill shake.  
 My limbs were all one pain and ache,  
 I was so weary and so sore  
 I don't think I'd a stood much more.  
 Bill in his corner bathed his thumb,  
 Buttoned his shirt and glowered glum.  
 "I'll never shake your hand," he said.  
 "I'd rather see my children dead.  
 I've been about and had some fun with you.  
 But you're a liar and I've done with you.  
 You've knocked me out, you didn't beat me;  
 Look out the next time that you meet me,  
 There'll be no friend to watch the clock for you  
 And no convenient thumb to crock for you,  
 And I'll take care, with much delight,  
 You'll get what you'd a got to-night;  
 That puts my meaning clear, I guess.  
 Now get to hell; I want to dress."

I dressed. My backers one and all  
 Said, "Well done you," or "Good old Saul."  
 "Saul is a wonder and a fly 'un,  
 What'll you have, Saul, at the 'Lion'?"  
 With merry oaths they helped me down  
 The stony wood-path to the town.

↓ The moonlight shone on Cabbage Walk,  
 It made the limestone look like chalk,  
 It was too late for any people,  
 Twelve struck as we went by the steeple.



A dog barked, and an owl was calling,  
 The Squire's brook was still a-falling,  
 The carved heads on the church looked down  
 On "Russell, Blacksmith of this Town,"  
 And all the graves of all the ghosts  
 Who rise on Christmas Eve in hosts  
 To dance and carol in festivity  
 For joy of Jesus Christ's Nativity  
 (Bell-ringer Dawe and his two sons  
 Beheld 'em from the bell-tower once),  
 Two and two about about  
 Singing the end of Advent out,  
 Dwindling down to windlestraws  
 When the glittering peacock craws,  
 As crawl the glittering peacock should  
 When Christ's own star comes over the wood.  
 Lamb of the sky come out of fold  
 Wandering windy heavens cold.  
 So they shone and sang till twelve  
 When all the bells ring out of theirselve;  
 Rang a peal for Christmas morn,  
 Glory, men, for Christ is born.

All the old monks' singing places  
 Glimmered quick with flitting faces,  
 Singing anthems, singing hymns  
 Under carven cherubims.  
 Ringer Dawe aloft could mark  
 Faces at the window dark  
 Crowding, crowding, row on row,  
 Till all the church began to glow.  
 The chapel glowed, the nave, the choir,  
 All the faces became fire  
 Below the eastern window high  
 To see Christ's star come up the sky.  
 Then they lifted hands and turned,  
 And all their lifted fingers burned,  
 Burned like the golden altar tallows,  
 Burned like a troop of God's own Hallows,  
 Bringing to mind the burning time  
 When all the bells will rock and chime

And burning saints on burning horses  
Will sweep the planets from their courses  
And loose the stars to burn up night.  
Lord, give us eyes to bear the light.

We all went quiet down the Scallenge  
Lest Police Inspector Drew should challenge.  
But 'Spector Drew was sleeping sweet,  
His head upon a charges sheet,  
Under the gas-jet flaring full,  
Snorting and snoring like a bull,  
His bull cheeks puffed, his bull lips blowing,  
His ugly yellow front teeth showing.  
Just as we peeped we saw him fumble  
And scratch his head, and shift, and mumble.

Down in the lane so thin and dark  
The tan-yards stank of bitter bark,  
The curate's pigeons gave a flutter,  
A cat went courting down the gutter,  
And none else stirred a foot or feather.  
The houses put their heads together,  
Talking, perhaps, so dark and sly,  
Of all the folk they'd seen go by,  
Children, and men and women, merry all,  
Who'd some day pass that way to burial.  
It was all dark, but at the turning  
The "Lion" had a window burning.  
So in we went and up the stairs,  
Treading as still as cats and hares.  
The way the stairs creaked made you wonder  
If dead men's bones were hidden under.  
At head of stairs upon the landing  
A woman with a lamp was standing;  
She greet each gent at head of stairs  
With "Step in, gents, and take your chairs.  
The punch'll come when kettle bubble,  
But don't make noise or there'll be trouble."  
'Twas Doxy Jane, a bouncing girl  
With eyes all sparks and hair all curl,  
And cheeks all red and lips all coal,  
And thirst for men instead of soul.

She's trod her pathway to the fire.  
Old Rivers had his nephew by her.

I step aside from Tom and Jimmy  
To find if she'd a kiss to gimme.  
I blew out lamp 'fore she could speak.  
She said, "If you ain't got a cheek,"  
And then beside me in the dim,  
"Did he beat you or you beat him?"  
"Why, I beat him" (though that was wrong),  
She said, "You must be turble strong.  
I'd be afraid you'd beat me, too."  
"You'd not," I said, "I wouldn't do."  
"Never?"

"No, never."

"Never?"

"No."

"O Saul. Here's missus. Let me go."

It wasn't missus, so I didn't,  
Whether I mid do or I midn't,  
Until she'd promised we should meet  
Next evening, six, at top of street,  
When we could have a quiet talk  
On that low wall up Worcester Walk.  
And while we whispered there together  
I give her silver for a feather  
And felt a drunkenness like wine  
And shut out Christ in husks and swine,  
I felt the dart strike through my liver.  
God punish me for't and forgive her.

Each one could be a Jesus mild,  
Each one has been a little child,  
A little child with laughing look,  
A lovely white unwritten book;  
A book that God will take, my friend,  
As each goes out at journey's end.  
The Lord who gave us Earth and Heaven  
Takes that as thanks for all He's given.  
The book He lent is given back  
All blotted red and smutted black.

"Open the door," said Jim, "and call."  
Jane gasped, "They'll see me. Loose me, Saul.  
She pushed me by, and ducked downstairs  
With half the pins out of her hair.  
I went inside the lit room rollin',  
Her scented handkerchief I'd stolen.  
"What would you fancy, Saul?" they said.  
"A gin punch hot and then to bed."  
"Jane, fetch the punch bowl to the gemmen;  
And mind you don't put too much lemon. ,  
Our good friend Saul has had a fight of it,  
Now smoke up, boys, and make a night of it."

The room was full of men and stink  
Of bad cigars and heavy drink.  
Riley was nodding to the floor  
And gurgling as he wanted more.  
His mouth was wide, his face was pale,  
His swollen face was sweating ale;  
And one of those assembled Greeks  
Had corked black crosses on his cheeks.  
Thomas was having words with Goss,  
He "wouldn't pay, the fight was cross."  
And Goss told Tom that "cross or no,  
The bets go as the verdicts go,  
By all I've ever heard or read of.  
So pay, or else I'll knock your head off."  
Jim Gurvil said his smutty say  
About a girl down Bye Street way.  
And how the girl from Frogatt's circus  
Died giving birth in Newent work'us.  
And Dick told how the Dymock wench  
Bore twins, poor thing, on Dog Hill bench  
And how he'd owned to one in court  
And how Judge made him sorry for't.  
Jock set a jew's harp twanging drily;  
"Gimme another cup," said Riley.  
A dozen more were in their glories  
With laughs and smokes and smutty stories;  
And Jimmy joked and took his sup  
And sang his song of "Up, come up."

Jane brought the bowl of stewing gin  
And poured the egg and lemon in,  
And whisked it up and served it out  
While bawdy questions went about.  
Jack chucked her chin, and Jim accost her  
With hits out of the "Maid of Gloster."  
And fifteen arms went round her waist.  
(And then men ask, Are Barmaids chaste?)

O young men, pray to be kept whole  
From bringing down a weaker soul.  
Your minute's joy so meet in doin'  
May be the woman's door to ruin;  
The door to wandering up and down,  
A painted whore at half a crown.  
The bright mind fouled, the beauty gay  
All eaten out and fallen away,  
By drunken days and weary tramps  
From pub to pub by city lamps,  
Till men despise the game they started,  
Till health and beauty are departed,  
And in a slum the reeking hag  
Mumbles a crust with toothy jag,  
Or gets the river's help to end  
The life too wrecked for man to mend.

We spat and smoked and took our swipe  
Till Silas up and tap his pipe,  
And begged us all to pay attention  
Because he'd several things to mention.  
We'd seen the fight (Hear, hear. That's you),  
But still one task remained to do;  
That task was his, he didn't shun it,  
To give the purse to him as won it;  
With this remark, from start to out  
He'd never seen a brisker bout.  
There was the purse. At that he'd leave it,  
Let Kane come forward to receive it.

I took the purse and hemmed and bowed,  
And called for gin punch for the crowd,  
And when the second bowl was done,  
I called, "Let 's have another one."

Si's wife come in and sipped and sipped  
(As women will) till she was pipped.  
And Si hit Dicky Twot a clouter  
Because he put his arm about her;  
But after Si got overtasked  
She sat and kissed whoever asked.  
My Doxy Jane was splashed by this,  
I took her on my knee to kiss.  
And Tom cried out, "O damn the gin;  
Why can't we all have women in?  
Bess Evans, now, or Sister Polly,  
Or those two housemaids at the Folly?  
Let some one nip to Biddy Price's,  
They'd all come in a brace of trices.  
Rose Davies, Sue, and Betsy Perks;  
One man, one girl, and damn all Turks."  
But, no. "More gin," they cried; "Come on,  
We'll have the girls in when it's gone."  
So round the gin went, hot and heady,  
Hot Hollands punch on top of deady.

Hot Hollands punch on top of stout  
Puts madness in and wisdom out.  
From drunken man to drunken man  
The drunken madness raged and ran.  
"I'm climber Joe who climbed the spire."  
"You're climber Joe the bloody liar."  
"Who says I lie?"

"I do."

"You lie,  
I climbed the spire and had a fly."  
"I'm French Suzanne, the Circus Dancer,  
I'm going to dance a bloody Lancer."  
"If I'd my rights I'm Squire's heir."  
"By rights I'd be a millionaire."  
"By rights I'd be the lord of you,  
But Farmer Scriggins had his do,  
He done me, so I've had to hoove it,  
I've got it all wrote down to prove it.  
And one of these dark winter nights  
He'll learn I mean to have my rights;

I'll bloody him a bloody fix,  
I'll bloody burn his bloody ricks."

From three long hours of gin and smokes,  
And two girls' breath and fifteen bloks',  
A warmish night, and windows shut,  
The room stank like a fox's gut.  
The heat and smell and drinking deep  
Began to stun the gang to sleep.  
Some fell downstairs to sleep on the mat,  
Some suored it sodden where they sat.  
Dick Twot had lost a tooth and wept,  
But all the drunken others slept.  
Jane slept beside me in the chair,  
And I got up; I wanted air.

I opened window wide and leaned  
Out of that pigstye of the fiend  
And felt a cool wind go like grace  
About the sleeping market-place.  
The clock struck three, and sweetly, slowly,  
The bells chimed Holy, Holy, Holy;  
And in a second's pause there fell  
The cold note of the chapel bell,  
And then a cock crew, flapping wings,  
And summat made me think of things.  
How long those ticking clocks had gone  
From church and chapel, on and on,  
Ticking the time out, ticking slow  
To men and girls who'd come and go,  
And how they ticked in belfry dark  
When half the town was bishop's park,  
And how they'd rung a chime full tilt  
The night after the church was built,  
And how that night was Lambert's Feast,  
The night I'd fought and been a beast.  
And how a change had come. And then  
I thought, "You tick to different men."  
What with the fight and what with drinking  
And being awake alone there thinking,  
My mind began to carp and tetter,  
"If this life 's all, the beasts are better."

And then I thought, "I wish I'd seen  
 The many towns this town has been;  
 I wish I knew if they'd a-got  
 A kind of summat we've a-not,  
 If them as built the church so fair  
 Were half the chaps folk say they were;  
 For they'd the skill to draw their plan,  
 And skill 's a joy to any man;  
 And they'd the strength, not skill alone,  
 To build it beautiful in stone;  
 And strength and skill together thus . . .  
 O, they were happier men than us.

"But if they were, they had to die  
 The same as every one and I.  
 And no one lives again, but dies,  
 And all the bright goes out of eyes,  
 And all the skill goes out of hands,  
 And all the wise brain understands,  
 And all the beauty, all the power  
 Is cut down like a withered flower.  
 In all the show from birth to rest  
 I give the poor dumb cattle best."

I wondered, then, why life should be,  
 And what would be the end of me  
 When youth and health and strength were gone  
 And cold old age came creeping on?  
 A keeper's gun? The Union ward?  
 Or that new quod at Hereford?  
 And looking round I felt disgust  
 At all my nights of drink and lust,  
 And all the looks of all the swine  
 Who'd said that they were friends of mine;  
 And yet I knew, when morning came,  
 The morning would be just the same,  
 For I'd have drinks and Jane would meet me  
 And drunken Silas Jones would greet me,  
 And I'd risk quod and keeper's gun  
 Till all the silly game was done.  
 "For parson chaps are mad supposin'  
 A chap can change the road he's chosen."



And then the Devil whispered "Saul,  
 Why should you want to live at all?  
 Why fret and sweat and try to mend?  
 It's all the same thing in the end.  
 But when it 's done," he said, "it 's ended.  
 Why stand it, since it can't be mended?"  
 And in my heart I heard him plain,  
 "Throw yourself down and end it, Kane."  
 "Why not?" said I. "Why not? But no,  
 I won't. I've never had my go.  
 I've not had all the world can give.  
 Death by and by, but first I'll live.  
 The world owes me my time of times,  
 And that time 's coming now, by crimes."  
 A madness took me then. I felt  
 I'd like to hit the world a belt.  
 I felt that I could fly through air,  
 A screaming star with blazing hair,  
 A rushing comet, crackling, numbing  
 The folk with fear of judgment coming,  
 A 'Lijah in a fiery car  
 Coming to tell folk what they are.

"That 's what I'll do," I shouted loud,  
 "I'll tell this sanctimonious crowd,  
 This town of window-peeping, prying,  
 Maligning, peering, hinting, lying,  
 Male and female human blots  
 Who would, but daren't be, whores and sots,  
 That they're so steeped in petty vice  
 That they're less excellent than lice,  
 That they're so soaked in petty virtue  
 That touching one of them will dirt you,  
 Dirt you with the stain of mean  
 Cheating trade and going between,  
 Pinching, starving, scraping, hoarding,  
 Spying through the chinks of boarding  
 To see if Sue the prentice lean  
 Dares to touch the margarine.  
 Fawning, cringing, oiling boots,  
 Raging in the crowd's pursuits,

Flinging stones at all the Stephens,  
 Standing firm with all the evens,  
 Making hell for all the odd,  
 All the lonely ones of God,  
 Those poor lonely ones who find  
 Dogs more mild than human kind.  
 For dogs," I said, "are nobles born  
 To most of you, you cockled corn.  
 I've known dogs to leave their dinner,  
 Nosing a kind heart in a sinner.  
 Poor old Crafty wagged his tail  
 The day I first came home from jail,  
 When all my folk, so primly clad,  
 Glowered black and thought me mad,  
 And muttered how they'd been respected,  
 While I was what they'd all expected.  
 (I've thought of that old dog for years,  
 And of how near I come to tears.)

"But you, you minds of bread and cheese,  
 Are less divine than that dog's fleas.  
 You suck blood from kindly friends,  
 And kill them when it serves your ends.  
 Double traitors, double black,  
 Stabbing only in the back,  
 Stabbing with the knives you borrow  
 From the friends you bring to sorrow.  
 You stab all that 's true and strong;  
 Truth and strength you say are wrong;  
 Meek and mild, and sweet and creeping,  
 Repeating, canting, cadging, peeping,  
 That 's the art and that 's the life  
 To win a man his neighbour's wife.  
 All that 's good and all that 's true,  
 You kill that, so I'll kill you."

At that I tore my clothes in shreds  
 And hurled them on the window leads;  
 I flung my boots through both the winders  
 And knocked the glass to little flinders;  
 The punch bowl and the tumblers followed,  
 And then I seized the lamps and holloed

And down the stairs, and tore back bolts,  
 As mad as twenty blooded colts;  
 And out into the street I pass,  
 As mad as two-year-olds at grass,  
 A naked madman waving grand  
 A blazing lamp in either hand.  
 I yelled like twenty drunken sailors,  
 "The devil's come among the tailors."  
 A blaze of flame behind me streamed,  
 And then I clashed the lamps and screamed .  
 "I'm Satan, newly come from hell."  
 And then I spied the fire-bell.

I've been a ringer, so I know  
 How best to make a big bell go.  
 So on to bell-rope swift I swoop,  
 And stick my one foot in the loop  
 And heave a down-swig till I groan,  
 "Awake, you swine, you devil's own."  
 I made the fire-bell awake,  
 I felt the bell-rope throb and shake;  
 I felt the air mingle and clang  
 And beat the walls a muffled bang,  
 And stifled back and boom and bay  
 Like muffled peals on Boxing Day,  
 And then surge up and gather shape,  
 And spread great pinions and escape;  
 And each great bird of clanging shrieks  
 O Fire, Fire! from iron beaks.  
 My shoulders cracked to send around  
 Those shrieking birds made out of sound  
 With news of fire in their bills.  
 (They heard 'em plain beyond Wall Hills.)

Up go the winders, out come heads,  
 I heard the springs go creak in beds;  
 But still I heave and sweat and tire,  
 And still the clang goes "Fire, Fire!"  
 "Where is it, then? Who is it, there?  
 You ringer, stop, and tell us where."  
 "Run round and let the Captain know."  
 "It must be bad, he's ringing so."

"It 's in the town, I see the flame;  
I look there! Look there, how red it came."  
"Where is it, then? O stop the bell."  
I stopped and called: "It 's fire of hell;  
And this is Sodom and Gomorrah,  
And now I'll burn you up, begorra."

By this the firemen were mustering,  
The half-dressed stable men were flustering,  
Backing the horses out of stalls  
While this man swears and that man bawls,  
"Don't take th' old mare. Back, Toby, back.  
Back, Lincoln. Where 's the fire, Jack?"  
"Damned if I know. Out Preston way."  
"No. It 's at Chancey's Pitch, they say."  
"It 's sixteen ricks at Pauntley burnt."  
"You back old Darby out, I durn't."  
They ran the big red engine out,  
And put 'em to with damn and shout.  
And then they start to raise the shire,  
"Who brought the news, and where 's the fire?"  
They'd moonlight, lamps, and gas to light 'em,  
I give a screech-owl's screech to fright 'em,  
And snatch from underneath their noses  
The nozzles of the fire hoses.  
"I am the fire. Back, stand back,  
Or else I'll fetch your skulls a crack;  
D'you see these copper nozzles here?  
They weigh ten pounds apiece, my dear;  
I'm fire of hell come up this minute  
To burn this town, and all that 's in it.  
To burn you dead and burn you clean,  
You cogwheels in a stopped machine,  
You hearts of snakes, and brains of pigeons,  
You dead devout of dead religions,  
You offspring of the hen and ass.  
By Pirate ruled, and Caiaphas.  
Now your account is totted. Learn  
Hell's flames are loose and you shall burn."

At that I leaped and screamed and ran,  
I heard their cries go "Catch him, man."

"Who was it?" "Down him." "Out him, Ern."  
 "Duck him at pump, we'll see who'll burn."  
 A policeman clutched, a fireman clutched,  
 A dozen others snatched and touched.  
 "By God, he's stripped down to his buff."  
 "By God, we'll make him warm enough."  
 "After him." "Catch him," "Out him," "Scrob him,  
 "We'll give him hell." "By God, we'll mob him."  
 "We'll duck him, scrout him, flog him, fratch him."  
 "All right," I said. "But first you'll catch him."

The men who don't know to the root  
 The joy of being swift of foot,  
 Have never known divine and fresh  
 The glory of the gift of flesh,  
 Nor felt the feet exult, nor gone  
 Along a dim road, on and on,  
 Knowing again the bursting glows  
 The mating hare in April knows,  
 • Who tingles to the pads with mirth  
 At being the swiftest thing on earth.  
 O, if you want to know delight,  
 Run naked in an autumn night,  
 And laugh, as I laughed then, to find  
 A running rabble drop behind,  
 And whang, on every door you pass,  
 Two copper nozzles, tipped with brass,  
 And doubly whang at every turning,  
 And yell, "All hell's let loose, and burning."

I beat my brass and shouted fire  
 At doors of parson, lawyer, squire,  
 At all three doors I threshed and slammed  
 And yelled aloud that they were damned.  
 I clodded squire's glass with turves  
 Because he spring-gunned his preserves.  
 Through parson's glass my nozzle swishes  
 Because he stood for loaves and fishes,  
 But parson's glass I spared a tittle.  
 He give me an orange once when little,  
 And he who gives a child a treat  
 ✓ Makes joy-bells ring in Heaven's street.

- And he who gives a child a home  
Builds palaces in Kingdom come,  
And she who gives a baby birth  
Brings Saviour Christ again to Earth,  
For life is joy, and mind is fruit,  
And body's precious earth and root.  
But lawyer's glass—well, never mind,  
Th' old Adam's strong in me, I find.  
God pardon man, and may God's son  
• Forgive the evil things I've done. •

What more? By Dirty Lane I crept  
Back to the "Lion," where I slept.  
The raging madness hot and floodin'  
Boiled itself out and left me sudden,  
Left me worn out and sick and cold,  
Aching as though I'd all grown old;  
So there I lay, and there they found me  
On door-mat, with a curtain round me.  
Si took my heels and Jane my head  
And laughed, and carried me to bed.  
And from the neighbouring street they reskied  
My boots and trousers, coat and weskit;  
They bath-bricked both the nozzles bright  
To be mementoes of the night,  
And knowing what I should awake with  
They flannelled me a quart to slake with,  
And sat and shook till half-past two  
Expecting Police Inspector Drew.

I woke and drank, and went to meat  
In clothes still dirty from the street.  
Down in the bar I heard 'em tell  
How someone rang the fire-bell,  
And how th' Inspector's search had thriven,  
And how five pounds reward was given.  
And Shepherd Boyce, of Marley, glad us  
By saying it was blokes from mad'us,  
Or two young rips lodged at the "Prince"  
Whom none had seen nor heard of since,  
Or that young blade from Worcester Walk  
(You know how country people talk).

Young Joe the ostler come in sad,  
He said th' old mare had bit his dad.  
He said there'd come a blazing screeching  
Daft Bible-prophet chap a-preaching,  
Had put th' old mare in such a taking  
She'd thought the bloody earth was quaking.  
And others come and spread a tale  
Of cut-throats out of Gloucester jail,  
And how we needed extra cops  
With all them Welsh come picking hops;  
With drunken Welsh in all our sheds  
We might be murdered in our beds.  
By all accounts, both men and wives  
Had had the scare up of their lives.

I ate and drank and gathered strength,  
And stretched along the bench full length,  
Or crossed to window seat to pat  
Black Silas Jones's little cat.  
At four I called, "You devil's own,  
The second trumpet shall be blown.  
The second trump, the second blast;  
Hell's flames are loosed, and judgment's passed  
Too late for mercy now. Take warning  
I'm death and hell and Judgment morning."  
I hurled the bench into the settle,  
I banged the table on the kettle,  
I sent Joe's quart of cider spinning.  
"Lo, here begins my second inning."  
Each bottle, mug, and jug and pot  
I smashed to crocks in half a tot;  
And Joe, and Si, and Nick, and Percy  
I rolled together topsy versy.  
And as I ran I heard 'em call,  
"Now damn to hell, what's gone with Saul?"

Out into street I ran uproarious,  
The devil dancing in me glorious.  
And as I ran I yell and shriek  
"Come on, now, turn the other cheek."  
Across the way by almshouse pump  
I see old puffing parson stump.

Old parson, red-eyed as a ferret  
From nightly wrestlings with the spirit;  
I ran across, and barred his path.  
His turkey gills went red as wrath  
And then he froze, as parsons can.  
"The police will deal with you, my man."  
"Not yet," said I, "not yet they won't;  
And now you'll hear me, like or don't.  
The English Church both is and was

• A subsidy of Caiaphas. •

I don't believe in Prayer nor Bible,  
They're lies all through, and you're a libel,  
A libel on the Devil's plan  
When first he miscreated man.  
You mumble through a formal code  
To get which many tyrants burned and glowed.  
I look on martyrs as mistakes,  
But still they burned for it at stakes;  
Your only fire 's the jolly fire  
Where you can guzzle port with Squire,  
And back and praise his damned opinions  
About his temporal dominions.  
You let him give the man who digs,  
A filthy hut unfit for pigs,  
Without a well, without a drain,  
With mossy thatch that lets in rain,  
Without a 'lotment, 'less he rent it,  
And never meat, unless he scent it,  
But weekly doles of 'leven shilling  
To make a grown man strong and willing  
To do the hardest work on earth  
And feed his wife when she gives birth,  
And feed his little children's bones.  
I tell you, man, the Devil groans.  
With all your main and all your might  
You back what is against what 's right;  
You let the Squire do things like these,  
You back him in't and give him ease,  
You take his hand, and drink his wine,  
And he's a hog, but you're a swine.  
For you take gold to teach God's ways  
And teach man how to sing God's praise.



And now I'll tell you what you teach  
In downright honest English speech.

"You teach the ground-down starving man  
That Squire's greed 's Jehovah's plan.  
You get his learning circumvented  
Lest it should make him discontented  
(Better a brutal, starving nation  
Than men with thoughts above their station),  
You let him neither read nor think,  
You goad his wretched soul to drink  
And then to jail, the drunken boor;  
O sad intemperance of the poor.  
You starve his soul till it 's rapsallion,  
Then blame his flesh for being stallion.  
You send your wife around to paint  
The golden glories of 'restraint.'  
How moral exercise bewild'rin'  
Would soon result in fewer children.  
You work a day in Squire's fields  
And see what sweet restraint it yields;  
A woman's day at turnip picking,  
Your heart 's too fat for plough or ricking.

"And you whom luck taught French and Greek  
Have purple flaps on either cheek,  
A stately house, and time for knowledge,  
And gold to send your sons to college,  
(That pleasant place, where getting learning  
Is also key to money earning,  
But quite your damn'dest want of grace  
Is what you do to save your face;  
The way you sit astride the gates  
By padding wages out of rates;  
Your Christmas gifts of shoddy blankets  
That every working soul may thank its  
Loving parson, loving squire  
Through whom he can't afford a fire.  
Your well-packed bench, your prison pen,  
To keep them something less than men;  
Your friendly clubs to help 'em bury,  
Your charities of midwifery.

Your bidding children duck and cap  
To them who give them workhouse pap.  
O, what you are, and what you preach,  
And what you do, and what you teach  
Is not God's Word, nor honest schism,  
† But Devil's cant and pauperism."

By this time many folk had gathered  
To listen to me while I blathered;  
I said my piece, and when I'd said it,  
I'll do old purple parson credit,  
He sunk (as sometimes parsons can)  
His coat's excuses in the man.  
"You think that Squire and I are kings  
Who made the existing state of things,  
And made it ill. I answer, No,  
States are not made, nor patched; they grow,  
Grow slow through centuries of pain  
And grow correctly in the main,  
But only grow by certain laws  
Of certain bits in certain jaws.  
You want to doctor that. Let be.  
You cannot patch a growing tree.  
Put these two words beneath your hat,  
These two: securus judicat.  
The social states of human kinds  
Are made by multitudes of minds,  
And after multitudes of years  
A little human growth appears  
Worth having, even to the soul  
Who sees most plain it 's not the whole.  
This state is dull and evil, both,  
I keep it in the path of growth;  
You think the Church an outworn retter;  
Kane, keep it, till you've built a better.  
And keep the existing social state;  
I quite agree it 's out of date,  
One does too much, another shirks,  
Unjust, I grant; but still ° . . it works.  
To get the whole world out of bed  
And washed, and dressed, and warmed, and fed,

To work, and back to bed again,  
 Believe me, Saul, costs worlds of pain.  
 Then, as to whether true or sham  
 That book of Christ, Whose priest I am;  
 The Bible is a lie, say you,  
 Where do you stand, suppose it true?  
 Good-bye. But if you've more to say,  
 My doors are open night and day.  
 Meanwhile, my friend, 'twould be no sin  
 To mix more water in your gin.  
 We're neither saints nor Philip Sidneys,  
 But mortal men with mortal kidneys."  
 He took his snuff, and wheezed a greeting,  
 And waddled off to mothers' meeting;  
 I hung my head upon my chest,  
 I give old purple parson best,  
 For while the Plough tips round the Pole  
 The trained mind outs the upright soul,  
 As Jesus said the trained mind might,  
 Being wiser than the sons of light,  
 But trained men's minds are spread so thin  
 They let all sorts of darkness in;  
 Whatever light man finds they doubt it,  
 They love not light, but talk about it.

But parson'd proved to people's eyes  
 That I was drunk, and he was wise;  
 And people grinned and women tittered,  
 And little children mocked and twittered,  
 So blazing mad, I stalked to bar  
 To show how noble drunkards are,  
 And guzzled spirits like a beast,  
 To show contempt for Church and priest,  
 Until, by six, my wits went round  
 Like hungry pigs in parish pound.  
 At half-past six, rememb'ring Jane,  
 I staggered into street again  
 With mind made up (or primed with gin)  
 To bash the cop who'd run me in;  
 For well I knew I'd have to cock up  
 My legs that night inside the lock-up,

And it was my most fixed intent  
 To have a fight before I went.  
 Our Fates are strange, and no one knows his;  
 Our lovely Saviour Christ disposes.

Jane wasn't where we'd planned, the jade,  
 She'd thought me drunk and hadn't stayed.  
 So I went up the Walk to look for her  
 And lingered by the little brook for her,  
 And dowsed my face, and drank at spring,  
 And watched two wild duck on the wing.  
 The moon come pale, the wind come cool,  
 A big pike leapt in Lower Pool,  
 The peacock screamed, the clouds were straking,  
 My cut cheek felt the weather breaking;  
 An orange sunset waned and thinned  
 Foretelling rain and western wind,  
 And while I watched I heard distinct  
 The metals on the railway clinked.  
 The blood-edged clouds were all in tatters,  
 The sky and earth seemed mad as hatters;  
 They had a death look, wild and odd,  
 Of something dark foretold by God.  
 And seeing it so, I felt so shaken  
 I wouldn't keep the road I'd taken,  
 But wandered back towards the inn  
 Resolved to brace myself with gin.  
 And as I walked, I said, "It's strange,  
 There's Death let loose to-night, and Change."

In Cabbage Walk I made a haul  
 Of two big pears from lawyer's wall,  
 And, munching one, I took the lane  
 Back into Market-place again.  
 Lamp-lighter Dick had passed the turning  
 And all the Homend lamps were burning,  
 The windows shone, the shops were busy,  
 But that strange Heaven made me dizzy.  
 The sky had all God's warning writ  
 In bloody marks all over it,  
 And over all I thought there was  
 A ghastly light beside the gas.

The Devil's tasks and Devil's rages  
Were giving me the Devil's wages.

In Market-place it 's always light,  
The big shop windows make it bright;  
And in the press of people buying  
I spied a little fellow crying  
Because his mother'd gone inside  
And left him there, and so he cried.  
And mother'd beat him when she found him,  
And mother's whip would curl right round him,  
And mother'd say he'd done't to crost her,  
Though there being crowds about he'd lost her.

Lord, give to men who are old and rougher  
The things that little children suffer,  
And let keep bright and undefiled  
The young years of the little child.  
I pat his head at edge of street  
And gi'm my second pear to eat.  
Right under lamp, I pat his head,  
"I'll stay till mother come," I said,  
And stay I did, and joked and talked,  
And shoppers wondered as they walked.  
"There's that Saul Kane, the drunken blaggard,  
Talking to little Jimmy Jaggard.  
The drunken blaggard reeks of drink."  
"Whatever will his mother think?"  
"Wherever has his mother gone?  
Nip round to Mrs. Jaggard's, John,  
And say her Jimmy's out again,  
In Market-place, with boozier Kane."  
"When he come out to-day he staggered.  
O, Jimmy Jaggard, Jimmy Jaggard."  
"His mother 's gone inside to bargain,  
Run in and tell her, Polly Margin,  
And tell her poacher Kane is tipsy  
And selling Jimmy to a gipsy."  
"Run in to Mrs. Jaggard, Ellen,  
Or else, dear know, there'll be no tellin',  
And don't dare leave yer till you've fount her,  
You'll find her at the linen counter."

I told a tale, to Jim's delight,  
Of where the tom-cats go by night,  
And how when moonlight come they went  
Among the chimneys black and bent,  
From roof to roof, from house to house,  
With little baskets full of mouse  
All red and white, both joint and chop  
Like meat out of a butcher's shop;  
Then all along the wall they creep  
And everyone is fast asleep,  
And honey-hunting moths go by,  
And by the bread-batch crickets cry;  
Then on they hurry, never waiting,  
To lawyer's backyard cellar grating,  
Where Jaggard's cat, with clever paw,  
Unhooks a broke-brick's secret door:  
Then down into the cellar black,  
Across the wood slug's slimy track,  
Into an old cask's quiet hollow,  
Where they've got seats for what 's to follow;  
Then each tom-cat lights little candles,  
And O, the stories and the scandals,  
And O, the songs and Christmas carols,  
And O, the milk from little barrels.  
They light a fire fit for roasting  
(And how good mouse-meat smells when toasting),  
Then down they sit to merry feast  
While moon goes west and sun comes east.

Sometimes they make so merry there  
Old lawyer come to head of stair  
To 'fend with fist and poker took firm  
His parchments channelled by the bookworm,  
And all his deeds, and all his packs  
Of withered ink and sealing wax;  
And there he stands, with candle raised,  
And listens like a man amazed,  
Or like a ghost a man stands dumb at,  
He says, "Hush! Hush! I'm sure there 's summat!"  
He hears outside the brown owl call,  
He hears the death-tick tap the wall,

The gnawing of the wainscot mouse,  
The creaking up and down the house,  
The unhooked window's hinges ranging,  
The sounds that say the wind is changing.  
At last he turns, and shakes his head,  
"It 's nothing, I'll go back to bed."

And just then Mrs. Jaggard came  
To view and end her Jimmy's shame.

She made one rush and gi'm a bat  
And shook him like a dog a rat.  
"I can't turn round but what you're straying,  
I'll give you tales and gipsy playing.  
I'll give you wand'ring off like this  
And listening to whatever 't is,  
You'll laugh the little side of the can,  
You'll have the whip for this, my man;  
And not a bite of meat nor bread  
You'll touch before you go to bed.  
Some day you'll break your mother's heart,  
After God knows she's done her part,  
Working her arms off day and night  
Trying to keep your collars white.  
Look at your face, too, in the street.  
What dirty filth 've you found to eat?  
Now don't you blubber here, boy, or  
I'll give you sum't to blubber for."  
She snatched him off from where we stand  
And knocked the pear-core from his hand,  
And looked at me, "You Devil's limb,  
How dare you talk to Jaggard's Jim;  
You drunken, poaching, boozing brute, you,  
If Jaggard was a man he'd shoot you."  
She glared all this, but didn't speak,  
She gasped, white hollows in her cheek;  
Jimmy was writhing, screaming wild,  
The shoppers thought I'd killed the child.

I had to speak, so I begun,  
"You'd oughtn't beat your little son;

He did no harm, but seeing him there  
I talked to him and gi'm a pear;  
I'm sure the poor child meant no wrong,  
It 's all my fault he stayed so long,  
He'd not have stayed, mum, I'll be bound  
If I'd not chanced to come around.  
It 's all my fault he stayed, not his.  
I kept him here, that 's how it is."

- "Oh! And how dare you, then?" says she,  
• "How dare you tempt my boy from me?  
How dare you do 't, you drunken swine,  
Is he your child or is he mine?  
A drunken sot they've had the beak to,  
Has got his dirty whores to speak to,  
His dirty mates with whom he drink,  
Not little children, one would think.  
Look on him, there," she says, "look on him  
And smell the stinking gin upon him,  
The lowest sot, the drunk'nest liar,  
The dirtiest dog in all the shire:  
Nice friends for any woman's son  
Aften ten years, and all she's done.

"For I've had eight, and buried five,  
And only three are left alive.  
I've given them all we could afford,  
I've taught them all to fear the Lord.  
They've had the best we had to give,  
The only three the Lord let live.

"For Minnie whom I loved the worst  
Died mad in childbed with her first.  
And John and Mary died of measles,  
And Rob was drowned at the Teasels.  
And little Nan, dear little sweet,  
A cart run over in the street;  
Her little shift was all one stain,  
I prayed God put her out of pain.  
And all the rest are gone or going  
The road to hell, and there's no knowing  
For all I've done and all I've made them  
I'd better not have overlaid them.



For Susan went the ways of shame  
The time the 'till'ry regiment came,  
And t'have her child without a father  
I think I'd have her buried rather.  
And Dicky boozes, God forgimme,  
And now t's to be the same with Jimmy  
And all I've done and all I've bore  
Has made a drunkard and a whore,  
A bastard boy who wasn't meant,  
And Jimmy gwine where Dicky went;  
For Dick began the self-same way  
And my old hairs are going gray,  
And my poor man's a withered knee,  
And all the burden falls on me.

"I've washed eight little children's limbs,  
I've taught eight little souls their hymns,  
I've risen sick and lain down pinched  
And borne it all and never flinched;  
But to see him, the town's disgrace,  
With God's commandments broke in 's face,  
Who never worked, not he, nor earned,  
Nor will do till the seas are burned,  
Who never did since he was whole  
A hand's turn for a human soul,  
But poached and stole and gone with women,  
And swilled down gin enough to swim in;  
To see him only lift one finger  
To make my little Jimmy linger.  
In spite of all his mother's prayers,  
And all her ten long years of cares,  
And all her broken spirit's cry  
That drunkard's finger puts them by,  
And Jimmy turns. And now I see  
That just as Dick was, Jim will be,  
And all my life will have been vain.  
I might have spared myself the pain,  
And done the world a blessed riddance  
If I'd a drowned 'em all like kittens.  
And he the sot, so strong and proud,  
Who'd make white shirts of 's mother's shroud,

He laughs now, it's a joke to him,  
Though it's the gates of hell to Jim.

"I've had my heart burnt out like coal,  
And drops of blood wrung from soul  
Day in, day out, in pain and tears,  
For five and twenty wretched years;  
And he, he's ate the fat and sweet,  
And loafed and spat at top of street,  
And drunk and leched from day till morrow,  
And never known a moment's sorrow.  
He come out drunk from th' inn to look  
The day my little Ann was took;  
He sat there drinking, glad and gay,  
The night my girl was led astray;  
He praised my Dick for singing well,  
The night Dick took the road to hell;  
And when my corpse goes stiff and blind,  
Leaving four helpless souls behind,  
He will be there still, drunk and strong.  
It do seem hard. It do seem wrong.  
But 'Woe to him by whom the offence,'  
Says our Lord Jesus' Testaments.  
Whatever seems, God doth not slumber,  
Though He lets pass times without number  
He'll come with trump to call His own,  
And this world's way'll be overthrown.  
He'll come with glory and with fire  
To cast great darkness on the liar,  
To burn the drunkard and the treacher,  
And do His judgment on the lecher,  
To glorify the spirits' faces  
Of those whose ways were stony places,  
Who chose with Ruth the better part;  
O Lord, I see Thee as Thou art,  
O God, the fiery four-edged sword,  
The thunder of the wrath outpoured,  
The fiery four-faced creatures burning,  
And all the four-faced wheels all turning,  
Coming with trump and fiery saint.  
Jim, take me home, I'm turning faint."

They went, and some cried, "Good old sod.  
 She put it to him straight, by God."  
 Summat she was, or looked, or said,  
 Went home and made me hang my head.  
 I slunk away into the night  
 Knowing deep down that she was right.  
 I'd often heard religious ranters,  
 And put them down as windy canters,  
 But this old mother made me see  
 The harm I done by being me,  
 Being both strong and given to sin  
 I 'tracted weaker vessels in.  
 So back to bar to get more drink,  
 I didn't dare begin to think,  
 And there were drinks and drunken singing,  
 As though this life were dice for flinging;  
 Dice to be flung, and nothing fuder,  
 And Christ's blood just another murder.  
 "Come on, drinks round, salve, drink hearty.  
 Now, Jane, the punch-bowl for the party.  
 If any here won't drink with me  
 I'll knock his bloody eyes out. See?  
 Come on, cigars round, rum for mine,  
 Sing us a smutty song, some swine."  
 But though the drinks and songs went round  
 That thought remained it was not drowned.  
 And when I'd rise to get a light  
 I'd think, "What's come to me to-night?"

There 's always crowd when drinks are standing.  
 The house doors slammed along the landing,  
 The rising wind was gusty yet,  
 And those who came in late were wet;  
 And all my body's nerves were snappin'  
 With sense of summat 'bout to happen.  
 And music seemed to come and go  
 And seven lights danced in a row.

There used to be a custom then,  
 Miss Bourne, the Friend, went round at ten  
 To all the pubs in all the place  
 To bring the drunkard's soul to grace;

Some sulked, of course, and some were stirred,  
But none gave her a dirty word.  
A tall pale woman, grey and bent,  
Fold said of her that she was sent.  
She wore Friend's clothes, and women smiled,  
But she'd a heart just like a child.  
She come to us near closing time  
When we were at some smutty rhyme,  
And I was mad and ripe for fun;  
I wouldn't a minded what I done,  
So when she come so prim and grey  
I pound the bar and sing, "Hooray,  
Here 's Quaker come to bless and kiss us,  
Come, have a gin and bitters, missus.  
Or maybe Quaker girls so prim  
Would rather start a bloody hymn.  
Now, Dick, oblige. A hymn, you swine,  
Pipe up the 'Officer of the Line,'  
A song to make one's belly ache,  
Or 'Nell and Roger at the Wake,'  
Or that sweet song, the talk in town,  
'The lady fair and Abel Brown.'  
'O, who 's that knocking at the door.'  
Miss Bourne 'll play the music score."  
The men stood dumb as cattle are,  
They grinned, but thought I'd gone too far,  
There come a hush and no one break it,  
They wondered how Miss Bourne would take it,  
She up to me with black eyes wide,  
She looked as though her spirit cried;  
She took my tumbler from the bar  
Beside where all the matches are  
And poured it out upon the floor dust,  
Among the fag-ends, spit and sawdust.

"Saul Kane," she said, "when next you drink,  
Do me the gentleness to think  
That every drop of drink accursed  
Makes Christ within you die of thirst,  
That every dirty word you say  
Is one more flint upon His way.

Another thorn about His head,  
Another mock by where He tread,  
Another nail, another cross.  
All that you are is that Christ's loss."  
The clock run down and struck a chime  
And Mrs. Si said, "Closing time."

The wet was pelting on the pane  
And something broke inside my brain,  
I heard the rain drip from the gutters  
And Silas putting up the shutters,  
While one by one the drinkers went;  
I got a glimpse of what it meant,  
How she and I had stood before  
In some old town by some old door  
Waiting intent while someone knocked  
Before the door for ever locked;  
She was so white that I was scared,  
A gas-jet, turned the wrong way, flared,  
And Silas snapped the bars in place.  
Miss Bourne stood white and searched my face.  
When Silas done, with ends of tunes  
He 'gan a-gathering the spittoons,  
His wife primmed lips and took the till.  
Miss Bourne stood still and I stood still,  
And "Tick. Slow. Tick. Slow" went the clock.  
She said, "He waits until you knock."  
She turned at that and went out swift,  
Si grinned and winked, his missus sniffed.

I heard her clang the "Lion" door,  
I marked a drink-drop roll to floor;  
It took up scraps of sawdust, furry,  
And crinkled on, a half inch, blurry;  
A drop from my last glass of gin;  
And someone waiting to come in,  
A hand upon the door latch gropin'  
Knocking the man inside to open.  
I know the very words I said,  
They bayed like bloodhounds in my head.  
"The water 's going out to sea  
And there 's a great moon calling me;

But there's a great sun calls the moon,  
And all God's bells will carol soon  
For joy and glory and delight  
Of someone coming home to-night."  
Out into darkness, out to night,  
My flaring heart gave plenty light,  
So wild it was there was no knowing  
Whether the clouds or stars were blowing;  
Blown chimney pots and folk blown blind  
And puddles glimmering like my mind,  
And chinking glass from windows banging,  
And inn signs swung like people hanging,  
And in my heart the drink unpriced,  
The burning cataracts of Christ.

I did not think, I did not strive,  
The deep peace burnt my me alive;  
The bolted door had broken in,  
I knew that I had done with sin.  
I knew that Christ had given me birth  
To brother all the souls on earth,  
And every bird and every beast  
Should share the crumbs broke at the feast.

O glory of the lighted mind.  
How dead I'd been, how dumb, how blind.  
The station brook, to my new eyes,  
Was babbling out of Paradise;  
The waters rushing from the rain  
Were singing Christ has risen again.  
I thought all earthly creatures knelt  
From rapture of the joy I felt.  
The narrow station-wall's brick ledge,  
The wild hop withering in the hedge,  
The lights in huntsman's upper storey  
Were parts of an eternal glory,  
Were God's eternal garden flowers.  
I stood in bliss at this for hours.

O glory of the lighted soul.  
The dawn came up on Bradlow Knoll,  
The dawn with glittering on the grasses  
The dawn which pass and never passes.

"It's dawn," I said, "and chimney's smoking,  
And all the blessed fields are soaking.  
It's dawn, and there's an engine shunting;  
And hounds, for huntsman's going hunting.  
It's dawn, and I must wander north  
Along the road Christ led me forth."

So up the road I wander slow  
Past where the snowdrops used to grow  
With celandines in early springs,  
When rainbows were triumphant things  
And dew so bright and flowers so glad,  
Eternal joy to lass and lad.  
And past the lovely brook I paced,  
The brook whose source I never traced,  
The brook, the one of two which rise  
In my green dream in Paradise,  
In wells where heavenly buckets clink  
To give God's wandering thirsty drink  
By those clean cots of carven stone  
Where the clear water sings alone.  
Then down, past that white-blossomed pond,  
And past the chestnut trees beyond,  
And past the bridge the fishers knew,  
Where yellow flag flowers once grew,  
Where we'd go gathering cops of clover,  
In sunny June times long since over.  
O clover-cops half white, half red,  
O beauty from beyond the dead.  
O blossom, key to earth and heaven,  
O souls that Christ has new forgiven.

Then down the hill to gipsies' pitch  
By where the brook clucks in the ditch.  
A gipsy's camp was in the copse,  
Three felted tents, with beehive tops,  
And round black marks where fires had been,  
And one old waggon painted green,  
And three ribbed horses wrenching grass,  
And three wild boys to watch me pass,  
And one old woman by the fire  
Hulking a rabbit warm from wire.

I loved to see the horses bait.  
I felt I walked at Heaven's gate,  
That Heaven's gate was opened wide  
Yet still the gipsies camped outside.  
The waste souls will prefer the wild,  
Long after life is meek and mild.  
Perhaps when man has entered in  
His perfect city free from sin,  
The campers will come past the walls  
With old lame horses full of galls,  
And waggons hung about with withies,  
And burning coke in tinkers' stithies,  
And see the golden town, and choose,  
And think the wild too good to lose.  
And camp outside, as these camped then,  
With wonder at the entering men.  
So past, and past the stone-heap white  
That dewberry trailers hid from sight,  
And down the field so full of springs,  
Where mowing peewits clap their wings,  
And past the trap made for the mill  
Into the field below the hill.  
There was a mist along the stream,  
A wet mist, dim, like in a dream;  
I heard the heavy breath of cows,  
And waterdrops from th' alder boughs;  
And eels, or snakes, in dripping grass  
Whipping aside to let me pass.  
The gate was backed against the ryme  
To pass the cows at milking time.  
And by the gate as I went out  
A moldwarp rooted earth wi' s snout.  
A few steps up the Callows' Lane  
Brought me above the mist again;  
The two great fields arose like death  
Above the mists of human breath.

All earthly things that blessed morning  
Were everlasting joy and warning.  
The gate was Jesus' way made plain  
The mole, was Satan foiled again,



Black blinded Satan snouting way  
Along the red of Adam's clay;  
The mist was error and damnation,  
The lane the road unto salvation,  
Out of the mist into the light;  
O blessed gift of inner sight.  
The past was faded like a dream;  
There come the jingling of a team,  
A ploughman's voice, a clink of chain,  
Slow hoofs, and harness under strain.  
Up the slow slope a team came bowing,  
Old Callow at his autumn ploughing,  
Old Callow, stooped above the hales,  
Ploughing the stubble into wales;  
His grave eyes looking straight ahead,  
Shearing a long straight furrow red;  
His plough-foot high to give it earth  
To bring new food for men to birth.

O wet red swathe of earth laid bare,  
O truth, O strength, O gleaming share,  
O patient eyes that watch the goal,  
O ploughman of the sinner's soul.  
O Jesus, drive the coulter deep  
To plough my living man from sleep.

Slow up the hill the plough team plod,  
Old Callow at the task of God,  
Helped by man's wit, helped by the brute  
Turning a stubborn clay to fruit,  
His eyes for ever on some sign  
To help him plough a perfect line.  
At top of rise the plough team stopped,  
The fore-horse bent his head and cropped.  
Then the chains chack, the brasses jingle,  
The lean reins gather through the cringle,  
The figures move against the sky,  
The clay wave breaks as they go by.  
I kneeled there in the muddy fallow,  
I knew that Christ was there with Callow,  
That Christ was standing there with me,  
That Christ had taught me what to be,

That I should plough, and as I ploughed  
My Saviour Christ would sing aloud,  
And as I drove the clods apart  
Christ would be ploughing in my heart,  
Through rest-harrow and bitter roots,  
Through all my bad life's rotten fruits.

O Christ who holds the open gate,  
O Christ who drives the furrow straight,  
O Christ, the plough, O Christ, the laughter  
Of holy white birds flying after,  
Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,  
And Thou wilt bring the young green corn  
The young green corn divinely springing,  
The young green corn for ever singing;  
And when the field is fresh and fair  
Thy blessed feet shall glitter there.  
And we will walk the weeded field,  
And tell the golden harvest's yield,  
The corn that makes the holy bread  
By which the soul of man is fed,  
The holy bread, the food unpriced,  
Thy everlasting mercy, Christ.

The share will jar on many a stone,  
Thou wilt not let me stand alone;  
And I shall feel (Thou wilt not fail),  
Thy hand on mine upon the hale.

Near Bullen Bank, on Gloucester Road,  
Thy everlasting mercy showed  
The ploughman patient on the hill  
For ever there, for ever still,  
Ploughing the hill with steady yoke  
Of pine-trees lightning-struck and broke.  
I've marked the May Hill ploughman stay  
There on his hill, day after day  
Driving his team against the sky,  
While men and women live and die.  
And now and then he seems to stoop  
To clear the coulter with the scoop,

Or touch an ox to haw or gee  
While Severn stream goes out to sea.  
The sea with all her ships and sails,  
And that great smoky port in Wales,  
And Gloucester tower bright i' the sun,  
All know that patient wandering one.  
And sometimes when they burn the leaves  
The bonfires' smoking trails and heaves,  
And girt red flames twink and twire  
As though he ploughed the hill afire.  
And in men's hearts in many lands  
A spiritual ploughman stands  
For ever waiting, waiting now,  
The heart's "Put in, man, zook the plough."

By this the sun was all one glitter,  
The little birds were all in twitter;  
Out of a tuft a little lark  
Went higher up than I could mark,  
His little throat was all one thirst  
To sing until his heart should burst,  
To sing aloft in golden light  
His song from blue air out of sight.  
The mist drove by, and now the cows  
Came plodding up to milking house,  
Followed by Frank, the Callows' cowman,  
Who whistled "Adam was a ploughman."  
There come such cawing from the rooks,  
Such running chuck from little brooks,  
One thought it March, just budding green  
With hedgerows full of celandine.  
An otter 'out of stream and played,  
Two hares come loping up and stayed;  
Wide-eyed and tender-eared but bold.  
Sheep bleated up by Penny's fold.  
I heard a partridge covey call;  
The morning sun was bright on all.

Down the long slope the plough team drove,  
The tossing rooks arose and hove.  
A stone struck on the share. A word  
Came to the team. The red earth stirred.

I crossed the hedge by shooter's gap,  
 I hitched my boxer's belt a strap,  
 I jumped the ditch and crossed the fallow,  
 I took the hales from farmer Callow.

How swift the summer goes,  
 Forget-me-not, pink, rose.  
 The young grass when I started  
 And now the hay is carted,  
 And now my song is ended,  
 And all the summer spende;  
 The blackbird's second brood  
 Routs beech-leaves in the wood,  
 The pink and rose have speeded,  
 Forget-me-not has seeded.  
 Only the winds that blew,  
 The rain that makes things new,  
 The earth that hides things old,  
 And blessings manifold.

O lovely lily clean,  
 O lily springing green,  
 O lily bursting white,  
 Dear lily of delight,  
 Spring in my heart agen  
 That I may flower to men.

*Great Hampden, June 1911.*



## THE WIDOW IN THE BYE STREET



## THE WIDOW IN THE BYE STREET

### I

**D**OWN Bye Street, in a little Shropshire town,  
There lived a widow with her only son:  
She had no wealth nor title to renown,  
Nor any joyous hours, never one.  
She rose from ragged mattress before sun  
And stitched all day until her eyes were red,  
And had to stitch, because her man was dead.

Sometimes she fell asleep, she stitched so hard,  
Letting the linen fall upon the floor;  
And hungry cats would steal in from the yard,  
And mangy chickens pecked about the door  
Craning their necks so ragged and so sore  
To search the room for bread-crumbs, or for mouse,  
But they got nothing in the widow's house.

Mostly she made her bread by hemming shrouds  
For one rich undertaker in the High Street,  
Who used to pray that folks might die in crowds  
And that their friends might pay to let them lie sweet;  
And when one died the widow in the Bye Street  
Stitched night and day to give the worm his dole.  
The dead were better dressed than that poor soul.

Her little son was all her life's delight,  
For in his little features she could find  
A glimpse of that dead husband out of sight,  
Where out of sight is never out of mind.  
And so she stitched till she was nearly blind,  
Or till the tallow candle end was done,  
To get a living for her little son.



Her love for him being such she would not rest,  
 It was a want which ate her out and in,  
 Another hunger in her withered breast  
 Pressing her woman's bones against the skin.  
 To make him plump she starved her body thin.  
 And he, he ate the food, and never knew,  
 He laughed and played as little children do.

When there was little sickness in the place  
 She took what God would send, and what God sent  
 Never brought any colour to her face  
 Nor life into her footsteps when she went  
 Going, she trembled always withered and bent  
 For all went to her son, always the same,  
 He was first served whatever blessing came.

Sometimes she wandered out to gather sticks,  
 For it was bitter cold there when it snowed.  
 And she stole hay out of the farmer's ricks  
 For bands to wrap her feet in while she sewed,  
 And when her feet were warm and the grate glowed  
 She hugged her little son, her heart's desire,  
 With "Jimmy, ain't it snug beside the fire?"

So years went on till Jimmy was a lad  
 And went to work as poor lads have to do,  
 And then the widow's loving heart was glad  
 To know that all the pains she had gone through  
 And all the years of putting on the screw,  
 Down to the sharpest turn a mortal can,  
 Had borne their fruit, and made her child a man.

He got a job at working on the line  
 Tipping the earth down, trolley after truck,  
 From daylight till the evening, wet or fine,  
 With arms all red from wallowing in the muck,  
 And spitting, as the trolly tipped, for luck,  
 And singing "Binger" as he swung the pick  
 Because the red blood ran in him so quick.

So ther' two children as the fruit, for supper  
 In Bye Sthe drank bitter herbs, and mother stay;  
 And boots in sons, and one sh' in the upper,  
 And room re' the parish h' settling day;  
 And beer for p' lump w' mother, worn and grey,  
 And fire in frost; And in the widow's eyes  
 It seemed the Lord had made earth paradise.

And there they sat of evenings after dark  
 Singing their song of "Binger," he and she,  
 Her poor old cackle made the mongrels bark,  
 And "You sing Binger, mother," carols he;  
 "By crimes, but that 's a good song, that her be."  
 And then they slept there in the room they shared,  
 And all the time Fate had his end prepared.

One thing alone made life not perfect sweet:  
 The mother's daily fear of what would come  
 When woman and her lovely boy should meet,  
 When the new wife would break up the old home.  
 Fear of that unborn evil struck her dumb,  
 And when her darling and a woman met,  
 She shook and prayed, "Not her, O God; not yet."

"Not yet, dear God, my Jimmy go from me."  
 Then she would subtly question with her son.  
 "Not very handsome, I don't think her be?"  
 "God help the man who marries such an one."  
 Her red eyes peered to spy the mischief done.  
 She took great care to keep the girls away,  
 And all her trouble made him easier prey.

"There was a woman out at Plaister's End,  
 Light of her body, fifty to the pound,  
 A copper coin for any man to spend,  
 Lovely to look on when the wits were drowned.  
 Her husband's skeleton was never found,  
 It lay among the rocks at Glydyr Mor  
 Where he drank poison, finding her a whore.

She was not native & would not rest,  
 Out Milford way, & and in, w.  
 She had the piteous breast onged,  
 "Anna," her name, a wit the skin. r.w.  
 She had lived at Plaister's Lady thin.. or two;  
 At Callow's cottage, renting half an acre;  
 She was a henwife and a perfume-maker.

✓ Secret she was; she lived in reputation;  
 But secret unseen threads went floating out:  
 Her smile, her voice, her face, were all temptation,  
 All subtle flies to trouble man the trout;  
 Man to entice, entrap, entangle, flout . . .  
 To take and spoil, and then to cast aside:  
 Gain without giving was the craft she plied.

And she complained, poor lonely widowed soul,  
 How no one cared, and men were rutters all;  
 While true love is an ever-burning goal  
 Burning the brighter as the shadows fall.  
 And all love's dogs went hunting at the call,  
 Married or not she took them by the brain,  
 Sucked at their hearts and tossed them back again.

Like the straw fires lit on Saint John's Eve,  
 She burned and dwindled in her fickle heart;  
 For if she wept when Harry took his leave,  
 Her tears were lures to beckon Bob to start.  
 And if, while loving Bob, a tinker's cart  
 Came by, she opened window with a smile  
 And gave the tinker hints to wait a while.

She passed for pure; but, years before, in Wales,  
 Living at Mountain Ash with different men,  
 Her less discretion had inspired tales  
 Of certain things she did, and how, and when,  
 Those seven years of youth; we are frantic then.  
 She had been frantic in her years of youth,  
 The tales were not more evil than the truth.

She had two children as the fruits of trade  
 Though she drank bitter herbs to kill the curse,  
 Both of them sons, and one she overlaid,  
 The other one the parish had to nurse.  
 Now she grew plump with money in her purse,  
 Passing for pure a hundred miles, I guess,  
 From where her little son wore workhouse dress.

There, with the Union boys he came and went,  
 A parish bastard fed on bread and tea,  
 Wearing a bright tin badge in furthest Gwent,  
 And no one knowing who his folk could be.  
 His mother never knew his new name: she,—  
 She touched the lust of those who served her turn,  
 And chief among her men was Shepherd Ern.

A moody, treacherous man of bawdy mind,  
 Married to that mild girl from Ercal Hill,  
 Whose gentle goodness made him more inclined  
 To hotter sauces sharper on the bill.  
 The new lust gives the lecher the new thrill,  
 The new wine scratches as it slips the throat,  
 The new flag is so bright by the old boat.

Ern was her man to buy her bread and meat, ✓  
 Half of his weekly wage was hers to spend,  
 She used to mock "How is your wife, my sweet?"  
 Or wail, "O, Ernie, how is this to end?"  
 Or coo, "My Ernie is without a friend,  
 She cannot understand my precious life,"  
 And Ernie would go home and beat his wife.

So the four souls are ranged, the chess-board set.  
 The dark, invisible hand of secret Fate  
 Brought it to come to being that they met  
 After so many years of lying in wait.  
 While we least think it he prepares his Mate.  
 Mate, and the King's pawn played, it never ceases,  
 Though all the earth is dust of taken pieces.

## II

OCTOBER Fair-time is the time for fun  
 For all the street is hurdled into rows  
 Of pens of heifers blinking at the sun,  
 And Lemster sheep which pant and seem to doze,  
 And stalls of hardbake and galanty shows,  
 And cheapjacks smashing crocks, and trumpets blowing,  
 And the loud organ of the horses going.

There you can buy blue ribbons for your girl  
 Or take her in a swing-boat tossing high,  
 Or hold her fast when all the horses whirl  
 Round to the steam pipe whanging at the sky,  
 Or stand her cockshies at the cocoa-shy,  
 Or buy her brooches with her name in red,  
 Or Queen Victoria done in gingerbread.

Then there are rifle shots at tossing balls,  
 "And if you hit you get a good cigar."  
 And strength-whackers for lads to lamm with mauls,  
 And Cheshire cheeses on a greasy spar.  
 The country folk flock in from near and far,  
 Women and men, like blow-flies to the roast,  
 All love the fair; but Anna loved it most.

Anna was all agog to see the fair;  
 She made Ern promise to be there to meet her,  
 To arm her round to all the pleasures there,  
 And buy her ribbons for her neck, and treat her,  
 So that no woman at the fair should beat her  
 In having pleasure at a man's expense.  
 She planned to meet him at the chapel fence.

So Ernie went; and Jimmy took his mother,  
 Dressed in her finest with a Monmouth shawl,  
 And there was such a crowd she thought she'd smother,  
 And O, she loved a pep'mint above all.  
 Clash go the crockeries where the cheapjacks bawl,  
 Baa go the sheep, thud goes the waxwork's drum,  
 And Ernie cursed for Anna hadn't come.

He hunted for her up and down the place,  
 Raging and snapping like a working brew.  
 "If you're with someone else I'll smash his face,  
 And when I've done for him I'll go for you."  
 He bought no fairings as he'd vowed to do  
 For his poor little children back at home  
 Stuck at the glass "to see till father come."

Not finding her, he went into an inn,  
 Busy with ringing till and scratching matches.  
 Where thirsty drovers mingled stout with gin  
 And three or four Welsh herds were singing catches.  
 The swing-doors clattered, letting in in snatches  
 The noises of the fair, now low, now loud.  
 Ern called for beer and glowered at the crowd.

While he was glowering at his drinking there  
 In came the gipsy Bessie, hawking toys;  
 A bold-eyed strapping harlot with black hair,  
 One of the tribe which camped at Shepherd's Bois.  
 She lured him out of inn into the noise  
 Of the steam-organ where the horses spun,  
 And so the end of all things was begun.

Newness in lust, always the old in love.  
 "Put up your toys," he said, "and come along,  
 We'll have a turn of swing-boats up above,  
 And see the murder when they strike the gong."  
 "Don't 'ee," she giggled. "My, but ain't you strong.  
 And where 's your proper girl? You don't know me."  
 "I do." "You don't." "Why, then, I will," said he.

Anna was late because the cart which drove her  
 Called for her late (the horse had broke a trace),  
 She was all dressed and scented for her lover,  
 Her bright blue blouse had imitation lace,  
 The paint was red as roses on her face,  
 She hummed a song, because she thought to see  
 How envious all the other girls would be.

When she arrived and found her Ernie gone,  
 Her bitter heart thought, "This is how it is.  
 Keeping me waiting while the sports are on:  
 Promising faithful, too, and then to miss.  
 O, Ernie, won't I give it you for this."  
 And looking up she saw a couple cling,  
 Ern with his arm round Bessie in the swing.

Ern caught her eye and spat, and cut her dead,  
 Bessie laughed hardly, in the gipsy way.  
 Anna, though blind with fury, tossed her head,  
 Biting her lips until the red was grey,  
 For bitter moments given, bitter pay,  
 The time for payment comes, early or late,  
 No earthly debtor but accounts to Fate.

She turned aside, telling with bitter oaths  
 What Ern should suffer if he turned agen,  
 And there was Jimmy stripping off his clothes  
 Within a little ring of farming men.  
 "Now, Jimmy, put the old tup into pen."  
 His mother, watching, thought her heart would curdle,  
 To see Jim drag the old ram to the hurdle.

Then the ram butted and the game began,  
 Till Jimmy's muscles cracked and the ram grunted.  
 The good old wrestling game of Ram and Man,  
 At which none knows the hunter from the hunted.  
 "Come and see Jimmy have his belly bunted."  
 "Good tup. Good Jim. Good Jimmy. Sick him, Rover,  
 By dang, but Jimmy's got him fairly over."

Then there was clap of hands and Jimmy grinned  
 And took five silver shillings from his backers,  
 And said th' old tup had put him out of wind  
 Or else he'd take all comers at the Whackers.  
 And some made rude remarks of rams and knackers,  
 And mother shook to get her son alone,  
 So's to be sure he hadn't broke a bone.

None but the lucky man deserves the fair,  
 For lucky men have money and success,  
 Things that a whore is very glad to share,  
 Or dip, at least, a finger in the mess.  
 Anne, with her raddled cheeks and Sunday dress,  
 Smiled upon Jimmy, seeing him succeed,  
 As though to say, "You are a man, indeed."

All the great things of life are swiftly done,  
 Creation, death, and love the double gate.  
 However much we dawdle in the sun  
 We have to hurry at the touch of Fate;  
 When Life knocks at the door no one can wait,  
 When Death makes his arrest we have to go.  
 And so with Love, and Jimmy found it so.

Love, the sharp spear, went pricking to the bone,  
 In that one look, desire and bitter aching,  
 Longing to have that woman all alone  
 For her dear beauty's sake all else forsaking;  
 And sudden agony that set him shaking  
 Lest she, whose beauty made his heart's blood cruddle,  
 Should be another man's to kiss and cuddle.

She was beside him when he left the ring,  
 Her soft dress brushed against him as he passed her;  
 He thought her penny scent a sweeter thing  
 Than precious ointment out of alabaster;  
 Love, the mild servant, makes a drunken master.  
 She smiled, half sadly, out of thoughtful eyes,  
 And all the strong young man was easy prize.

She spoke, to take him, seeing him a sheep,  
 "How beautiful you wrestled with the ram,  
 It made me all go tremble just to peep,  
 I am that fond of wrestling, that I am.  
 Why, here 's your mother, too. Good-evening, ma'am.  
 I was just telling Jim how well he done,  
 How proud you must be of so fine a son."



Old mother blinked, while Jimmy hardly knew  
 Whether he knew the woman there or not;  
 But well he knew, if not, he wanted to,  
 Joy of her beauty ran in him so hot,  
 Old trembling mother by him was forgot,  
 While Anna searched the mother's face, to know  
 Whether she took her for a whore or no.

The woman's maxim, "Win the woman first,"  
 Made her be gracious to the withered thing.  
 "This being in crowds do give one such a thirst,  
 I wonder if they've tea going at 'The King'?  
 My throat's that dry my very tongue do cling,  
 Perhaps you'd take my arm, we'd wander up  
 (If you'd agree) and try and get a cup.

"Come, ma'am, a cup of tea would do you good;  
 There's nothing like a nice hot cup of tea  
 After the crowd and all the time you've stood;  
 And 'The King' 's strict, it isn't like 'The Key.'  
 Now, take my arm, my dear, and lean on me."  
 And Jimmy's mother, being nearly blind,  
 Took Anna's arm, and only thought her kind.

So off they set, with Anna talking to her,  
 How nice the tea would be after the crowd,  
 And mother thinking half the time she knew her,  
 And Jimmy's heart's blood ticking quick and loud,  
 And Death beside him knitting at his shroud,  
 And all the High Street babbling with the fair,  
 And white October clouds in the blue air.

So tea was made and down they sat to drink;  
 O the pale beauty sitting at the board!  
 There is more death in women than we think,  
 There is much danger in the soul adored,  
 The white hands bring the poison and the cord;  
 Death has a lodge in lips as red as cherries,  
 Death has a mansion in the yew-tree berries.

They sat there talking after tea was done,  
 And Jimmy blushed at Anna's sparkling looks,  
 And Anna flattered mother on her son,  
 Catching both fishes on her subtle hooks.  
 With twilight, tea and talk in ingle-nooks,  
 And music coming up from the dim street,  
 Mother had never known a fair so sweet.

Now cow-bells clink, for milking time is come;  
 The drovers stack the hurdles into carts,  
 New masters drive the straying cattle home,  
 Many a young calf from his mother parts,  
 Hogs straggle back to sty by fits and starts;  
 The farmers take a last glass at the inns,  
 And now the frolic of the fair begins.

All of the side shows of the fair are lighted,  
 Flares and bright lights, and brassy cymbals clanging,  
 "Beginning now" and "Everyone's invited,"  
 Shatter the pauses of the organ's whanging,  
 The Oldest Show on Earth and the Last Hanging,  
 "The Murder in the Red Barn," with real blood,  
 The rifles crack, the Sally shy-sticks thud.

Anna walked slowly homewards with her prey,  
 Holding old tottering mother's weight upon her,  
 And pouring in sweet poison on the way  
 Of "Such a pleasure, ma'am, and such an honour,"  
 And "One 's so safe with such a son to con her  
 Through all the noises and through all the press,  
 Boys daredn't squirt tormentors on her dress."

At mother's door they stop to say "Good-night."  
 And mother must go in to set the table.  
 Anna pretended that she felt a fright  
 To go alone through all the merry babel:  
 "My friends are waiting at 'The Cain and Abel,'  
 Just down the other side of Market Square,  
 It 'd be a mercy if you'd set me there."

So Jimmy came, while mother went inside;  
 Anna has got her victim in her clutch.  
 Jimmy, all blushing, glad to be her guide,  
 Thrilled by her scent, and trembling at her touch.  
 She was all white and dark, and said not much;  
 She sighed, to hint that pleasure's grave was dug,  
 And smiled within to see him such a mug.

They passed the doctor's house among the trees,  
 She sighed so deep that Jimmy asked her why.  
 "I'm too unhappy upon nights like these,  
 When everyone has happiness but I!"  
 "Then, aren't you happy?" She appeared to cry,  
 Blinked with her eyes and turned away her head:  
 "Not much; but some men understand," she said.

Her voice caught lightly on a broken note,  
 Jimmy half-dared but dared not touch her hand,  
 Yet all his blood went pumping in his throat  
 Beside the beauty he could understand,  
 And Death stopped knitting at the muffling band.  
 "The shroud is done," he muttered, "toe to chin."  
 He snapped the ends, and tucked his needles in.

Jimmy, half stammering, choked, "Has any man——"  
 He stopped, she shook her head to answer "No."  
 "Then tell me." "No. P'raps some day, if I can.  
 It hurts to talk of some things ever so.  
 But you're so different. There, come, we must go.  
 None but unhappy women know how good  
 It is to meet a soul who's understood."

"No. Wait a moment. May I call you Anna?"  
 "Perhaps. There must be nearness 'twixt us two."  
 Love in her face hung out his bloody banner,  
 And all love's clanging trumpets shocked and blew.  
 "When we got up to-day we never knew."  
 "I'm sure I didn't think, nor you did." "Never."  
 "And now this friendship's come to us for ever."

"Now, Anna, take my arm, dear." "Not to-night,  
That must come later when we know our minds,  
We must agree to keep this evening white,  
We'll eat the fruit to-night and save the rinds."  
And all the folk whose shadows darked the blinds,  
And all the dancers whirling in the fair,  
Were wretched worms to Jim and Anna there.

"How wonderful life is," said Anna, lowly,  
"But it begins again with you for friend."  
In the dim lamplight Jimmy thought her holy,  
A lovely fragile thing for him to tend,  
Grace beyond measure, beauty without end.  
"Anna," he said; "Good-night. This is the door.  
I never knew what people meant before."

"Good-night, my friend. Good-bye." "But, O my sweet,  
The night's quite early yet, don't say good-bye,  
Come just another short turn down the street,  
The whole life's bubbling up for you and I.  
Somehow I feel to-morrow we may die.  
Come just as far as to the blacksmith's light."  
But "No," said Anna; "Not to-night. Good-night."

All the tides triumph when the white moon fills.  
Down in the race the toppling waters shout,  
The breakers shake the bases of the hills,  
There is a thundering where the streams go out.  
And the wise shipman puts his ship about  
Seeing the gathering of those waters wan,  
But what when love makes high tide in a man?

Jimmy walked home with all his mind on fire,  
One lovely face for ever set in flame.  
He shivered as he went, like tautened wire,  
Surge after surge of shuddering in him came  
And then swept out repeating one sweet name,  
"Anna, O Anna," to the evening star.  
Anna was sipping whiskey in the bar.

So back to home and mother Jimmy wandered,  
Thinking of Plaister's End and Anna's lips.  
He ate no supper worth the name, but pondered  
On Plaister's End hedge, scarlet with ripe hips,  
And of the lovely moon there in eclipse,  
And how she must be shining in the house  
Behind the hedge of those old dog-rose boughs.

Old mother cleared away. The clock struck eight.  
"Why, boy, you've left your bacon, lawks a me,  
So that 's what comes of having tea so late,  
Another time you'll go without your tea.  
Your father liked his cup, too, didn't he,  
Always 'another cup' he used to say,  
He never went without on any day.

"How nice the lady was and how she talked,  
I've never had a nicer fair, not ever."  
"She said she'd like to see us if we walked  
To Plaister's End, beyond by Watersever.  
Nice-looking woman, too, and that, and clever;  
We might go round one evening, p'raps, we two;  
Or I might go, if it 's too far for you."

"No," said the mother, "we're not folk for that;  
Meet at the fair and that, and there an end.  
Rake out the fire and put out the cat,  
These fairs are sinful, tempting folk to spend.  
Of course she spoke polite and like a friend;  
Of course she had to do, and so I let her,  
But now it 's done and past, so I forget her."

"I don't see why forget her. Why forget her?  
She treat us kind. She weren't like everyone.  
I never saw a woman I liked better,  
And he 's not easy pleased, my father's son.  
So I'll go round some night when work is done."  
"Now, Jim, my dear, trust mother, there 's a dear."  
"Well, so I do, but sometimes you're so queer."

She blinked at him out of her withered eyes  
 Below her lashless eyelids red and bleared.  
 Her months of sacrifice had won the prize,  
 Her Jim had come to what she always feared.  
 And yet she doubted, so she shook and peered  
 And begged her God not let a woman take  
 The lovely son whom she had starved to make.

Doubting, she stood the dishes in the rack,  
 "We'll ask her in some evening, then," she said.  
 "How nice her hair looked in the bit of black."  
 And still she peered from eyes all dim and red  
 To note at once if Jimmy drooped his head,  
 Or if his ears blushed when he heard her praised,  
 And Jimmy blushed and hung his head and gazed.

"This is the end," she thought. "This is the end.  
 I'll have to sew again for Mr. Jones,  
 Do hems when I can hardly see to mend,  
 And have the old ache in my marrow-bones.  
 And when his wife 's in child-bed, when she groans,  
 She'll send for me until the pains have ceased,  
 And give me leavings at the christening feast.

"And sit aslant to eye me as I eat,  
 'You're only wanted here, ma'am, for to-day,  
 Just for the christ'ning party, for the treat,  
 Don't ever think I mean to let you stay;  
 Two 's company, three 's none, that 's what I say.'"  
 Life can be bitter to the very bone  
 When one is poor, and woman, and alone.

"Jimmy," she said, still doubting, "Come, my dear,  
 Let's have our 'Binger' 'fore we go to bed."  
 And then "The parson's dog," she cackled clear,  
 "Lep over stile," she sang, nodding her head,  
 "His name was little Binger." "Jim," she said,  
 "Binger, now, chorus" . . . Jimmy kicked the hob,  
 The sacrament of song died in a sob.

Jimmy went out into the night to think  
 Under the moon so steady in the blue.  
 The woman's beauty ran in him like drink,  
 The fear that men had loved her burnt him through;  
 The fear that even then another knew  
 All the deep mystery which women make  
 To hide the inner nothing made him shake.

"Anna, I love you, and I always shall."  
 He looked towards Plaister's End beyond Cot Hills.  
 A white star glimmered in the long canal,  
 A droning from the music came in thrills.  
 Love is a flame to burn out human wills,  
 Love is a flame to set the will on fire,  
 Love is a flame to cheat men into mire.

One of the three, we make Love what we choose,  
 But Jimmy did not know, he only thought  
 That Anna was too beautiful to lose,  
 That she was all the world and he was naught,  
 That it was sweet, though bitter, to be caught.  
 "Anna, I love you." Underneath the moon,  
 "I shall go mad unless I see you soon."

The fair's lights threw aloft a misty glow.  
 The organ whangs, the giddy horses reel,  
 The rifles cease, the folk begin to go,  
 The hands unclamp the swing-boats from the wheel  
 There is a smell of trodden orange peel;  
 The organ drones and dies, the horses stop,  
 And then the tent collapses from the top.



The fair is over, let the people troop,  
 The drunkards stagger homewards down the gutters,  
 The showmen heave in an excited group,  
 The poles tilt slowly down, the canvas flutters,  
 The mauls knock out the pins, the last flare sputters.  
 "Lower away." "Go easy." "Lower, lower."  
 "You've dang near knock my skull in. Loose it slower."

"Back in the horses." "Are the swing-boats loaded?"  
 "All right to start." "Bill, where 's the cushion gone?  
 The red one for the Queen?" "I think I stowed it."  
 "You think, you think. Lord, where 's that cushion, John?"  
 "It 's in that bloody box you're sitting on,  
 What more d'you want?" A concertina plays  
 Far off as wandering lovers go their ways.

Up the dñm Bye Street to the market-place  
 The dead bones of the fair are borne in carts,  
 Horses and swing-boats at a funeral pace  
 After triumphant hours quickening hearts;  
 A policeman eyes each waggon as it starts,  
 The drowsy showmen stumble half asleep,  
 One of them catcalls, having drunken deep.

So out, over the pass, into the plain,  
 And the dawn finds them filling empty cans  
 In some sweet-smelling dusty country lane,  
 Where a brook chatters over rusty pans.  
 The iron chimneys of the caravans  
 Smoke as they go. And now the fair has gone  
 To find a new pitch somewhere further on.

But as the fair moved out two lovers came,  
 Ernie and Bessie loitering out together;  
 Bessie with wild eyes, ~~hungry as a flame,~~  
 Ern like a stallion tugging at a tether.  
 It was calm moonlight, and October weather,  
 So still, so lovely, as they topped the ridge,  
 They brushed by Jimmy standing on the bridge.

And, as they passed, they gravely eyed each other,  
 And the blood burned in each heart beating there;  
 And out into the Bye Street tottered mother,  
 Without her shawl, in the October air.  
 "Jimmy," she cried, "Jimmy." And Bessie's hair  
 Drooped on the instant over Ernie's face,  
 And the two lovers clung in an embrace.



"O, Ern." "My own, my Bessie." As they kissed  
 Jimmy was envious of the thing unknown.  
 So this was Love, the something he had missed.  
 Woman and man athirst, aflame, alone.  
 Envy went knocking at his marrow-bone,  
 And Anna's face swam up so dim, so fair,  
 Shining and sweet, with poppies in her hair.

## III

AFTER the fair, the gang began again.  
 Tipping the trollies down the banks of earth.  
 The truck of stone clanks on the endless chain,  
 A clever pony guides it to its berth.  
 "Let go." It tips, the navvies shout for mirth  
 To see the pony step aside, so wise,  
 But Jimmy sighed, thinking of Anna's eyes.

And when he stopped his shovelling he looked  
 Over the junipers towards Plaister way,  
 The beauty of his darling had him hooked,  
 He had no heart for wrastling with the clay.  
 "O Lord Almighty, I must get away;  
 O Lord, I must. I must just see my flower,  
 Why, I could run there in the dinner hour."

The whistle on the pilot engine blew,  
 The men knocked off, and Jimmy slipped aside  
 Over the fence, over the bridge, and through,  
 And then ahead along the water-side,  
 Under the red-brick rail-bridge, arching wide,  
 Over the hedge, across the fields, and on;  
 The foreman asked: "Where 's Jimmy Gurney gone?"

It is a mile and more to Plaister's End,  
 But Jimmy ran the short way by the stream,  
 And there was Anna's cottage at the bend,  
 With blue smoke on the chimney, faint as steam.  
 "God, she 's at home," and up his heart a gleam  
 Leapt like a rocket on November nights,  
 And shattered slowly in a burst of lights.

Anna wassinging at her kitchen fire,  
 She was surprised, and not well pleased to see  
 A sweating navvy, red with heat and mire,  
 Come to her door, whoever he might be.  
 But when she saw that it was Jimmy, she  
 Smiled at his eyes upon her, full of pain,  
 And thought, "But, still, he mustn't come again."

"People will talk; boys are such crazy things;  
 But he's a dear boy though he is so green."  
 So, hurriedly, she slipped her apron strings,  
 And dabbed her hair, and wiped her fingers clean,  
 And came to greet him languid as a queen,  
 Looking as sweet, as fair, as pure, as sad,  
 As when she drove her loving husband mad.

"Poor boy," she said, "poor boy, how hot you are."  
 She laid a cool hand to his sweating face.  
 "How kind to come. Have you been running far?  
 I'm just going out; come up the road a pace.  
 O dear, these hens; they're all about the place."  
 So Jimmy shooed the hens at her command,  
 And got outside the gate as she had planned.

"Anna, my dear, I love you; love you, true;  
 I had to come—I don't know—I can't rest—  
 I lay awake all night, thinking of you.  
 Many must love you, but I love you best."  
 "Many have loved me, yes, dear," she confessed,  
 She smiled upon him with a tender pride,  
 "But my love ended when my husband died."

"Still, we'll be friends, dear friends, dear, tender friends.  
 Love with its fever's at an end for me.  
 Be by me gently now the fever ends,  
 Life is a lovelier thing than lovers see,  
 I'd like to trust a man, Jimmy," said she,  
 "May I trust you?" "Oh, Anna dear, my dear—"  
 "Don't come so close," she said, "with people near."

"Dear, don't be vexed; it's very sweet to find  
 One who will understand; but life is life,  
 And those who do not know are so unkind.  
 But you'll be by me, Jimmy, in the strife,  
 I love you though I cannot be your wife;  
 And now be off, before the whistle goes,  
 Or else you'll lose your quarter, goodness knows."

"When can I see you, Anna? Tell me, dear.  
 To-night? To-morrow? Shall I come to-night?"  
 "Jimmy, my friend, I cannot have you here;  
 But when I come to town perhaps we might.  
 Dear, you must go; no kissing; you can write,  
 And I'll arrange a meeting when I learn  
 What friends are doing" (meaning Shepherd Ern).

"Good-bye, my own." "Dear Jim, you understand.  
 If we were only free, dear, free to meet,  
 Dear, I would take you by your big, strong hand  
 And kiss your dear boy eyes so blue and sweet;  
 But my dead husband lies under the sheet,  
 Dead in my heart, dear, lovely, lonely one,  
 So, Jim, my dear, my loving days are done.

"But though my heart is buried in his grave—  
 Something might be—friendship and utter trust—  
 And you, my dear starved little Jim shall have  
 Flowers of friendship from my dead heart's dust;  
 Life would be sweet if men would never lust.  
 Why do you, Jimmy? Tell me sometime, dear,  
 Why men are always what we women fear.

"Not now. Good-bye; we understand, we two,  
 And life, O Jim, how glorious life is;  
 This sunshine in my heart is due to you;  
 I was so sad, and life has given this.  
 I think 'I wish I had something of his,'  
 Do give me something, will you be so kind?  
 Something to keep you always in my mind."

"I will," he said. "Now go, or you'll be late."  
 He broke from her and ran, and never dreamt  
 That as she stood to watch him from the gate  
 Her heart was half amusement, half contempt,  
 Comparing Jim the squab, red and unkempt,  
 In sweaty corduroys, with Shepherd Ern.  
 She blew him kisses till he passed the turn.

The whistle blew before he reached the line; •  
 The foreman asked him what the hell he meant,  
 Whether a duke had asked him out to dine,  
 Or if he thought the bag would pay his rent?  
 And Jim was fined before the foreman went.  
 But still his spirit glowed from Anna's words,  
 Cooed in the voice so like a singing bird's.

"O Anna, darling, you shall have a present;  
 I'd give you golden gems if I were rich,  
 And everything that 's sweet and all that 's pleasant."  
 He dropped his pick as though he had a stitch,  
 And stared tow'ards Plaister's End, past Bushe's Pitch.  
 "O beauty, what I have to give I'll give,  
 All mine is yours, beloved, while I live."

All through the afternoon his pick was slacking,  
 His eyes were always turning west and south,  
 The foreman was inclined to send him packing,  
 But put it down to after fair-day drouth;  
 He looked at Jimmy with an ugly mouth,  
 And Jimmy slacked, and muttered in a moan,  
 "My love, my beautiful, my very own."

So she had loved. Another man had had her;  
 She had been his with passion in the night;  
 An agony of envy made him sadder,  
 Yet stabbed a pang of bitter-sweet delight—  
 O he would keep his image of her white.  
 The foreman cursed, stepped up, and asked him flat  
 What kind of gum-tree he was gaping at.

It was Jim's custom, when the pay day came,  
 To take his weekly five and twenty shilling  
 Back in the little packet to his dame;  
 Not taking out a farthing for a filling,  
 Nor twopence for a pot, for he was willing  
 That she should have it all to save or spend.  
 But love makes many lovely customs end.

Next pay day came and Jimmy took the money,  
 But not to mother, for he meant to buy  
 A thirteen-shilling locket for his honey,  
 Whatever bellies hungered and went dry,  
 A silver heart-shape with a ruby eye.  
 He bought the thing and paid the shopman's price,  
 And hurried off to make the sacrifice.

"Is it for me? You dear, dear generous boy.  
 How sweet of you. I'll wear it in my dress.  
 When you're beside me life is such a joy,  
 You bring the sun to solitariness."  
 She brushed his jacket with a light caress,  
 His arms went round her fast, she yielded meek;  
 He had the happiness to kiss her cheek.

"My dear, my dear." "My very dear, my Jim,  
 How very kind my Jimmy is to me;  
 I ache to think that some are harsh to him;  
 Not like my Jimmy, beautiful and free.  
 My darling boy, how lovely it would be  
 If all would trust as we two trust each other."  
 And Jimmy's heart grew hard against his mother.

She, poor old soul, was waiting in the gloom  
 For Jimmy's pay, that she could do the shopping.  
 The clock ticked out a solemn tale of doom;  
 Clogs on the bricks outside went clippa-clopping,  
 The owls were coming out and dew was dropping.  
 The bacon burnt, and Jimmy not yet home.  
 The clock was ticking dooms out like a gnome.

"What can have kept him that he doesn't come?  
 O God, they'd tell me if he'd come to hurt."  
 The unknown, unseen evil struck her numb,  
 She saw his body bloody in the dirt,  
 She saw the life blood pumping through the shirt,  
 She saw him tipsy in the navvies' booth,  
 She saw all forms of evil but the truth.

At last she hurried up the line to ask  
 If Jim were hurt or why he wasn't back.  
 She found the watchman wearing through his task;  
 Over the fire basket in his shack;  
 Behind, the new embankment rose up black.  
 "Gurney?" he said. "He'd got to see a friend."  
 "Where?" "I dunno. I think out Plaister's End."

Thanking the man, she tottered down the hill,  
 The long-feared fang had bitten to the bone.  
 The brook beside her talked as water will  
 That it was lonely singing all alone,  
 The night was lonely with the water's tone,  
 And she was lonely to the very marrow.  
 Love puts such bitter poison on Fate's arrow.

She went the long way to them by the mills,  
 She told herself that she must find her son.  
 The night was ominous of many ills;  
 The sougling larch-clump almost made her run,  
 Her boots hurt (she had got a stone in one)  
 And bitter beaks were tearing at her liver  
 That her boy's heart was turned from her forever.

She kept the lane, past Spindle's, past the Callows',  
 Her lips still muttering prayers against the worst,  
 And there were people coming from the shallows,  
 Along the wild duck patch by Beggar's Hurst.  
 Being in moonlight mother saw them first,  
 She saw them moving in the moonlight dim,  
 A woman with a sweet voice saying "Jim."

Trembling she grovelled down into the ditch,  
 They wandered past her pressing side to side,  
 "O Anna, my belov'd, if I were rich."  
 It was her son, and Anna's voice replied,  
 "Dear boy, dear beauty boy, my love and pride."  
 And he: "It 's but a silver thing, but I  
 Will earn you better lockets by and by."

"Dear boy, you mustn't." "But I mean to do."  
 "What was that funny sort of noise I heard?"  
 "Where?" "In the hedge; a sort of sob or coo."  
 Listen. It 's gone." "It may have been a bird."  
 Jim tossed a stone but mother never stirred.  
 She hugged the hedgerow, choking down her pain  
 While the hot tears were blinding in her brain.

The two passed on, the withered woman rose,  
 For many minutes she could only shake,  
 Staring ahead with trembling little "Oh's,"  
 The noise a very frightened child might make.  
 "O God, dear God, don't let the woman take  
 My little son, God, not my little Jim.  
 O God, I'll have to starve if I lose him."

So back she trembled, nodding with her head,  
 Laughing and trembling in the bursts of tears,  
 Her ditch-filled boots both squelching in the tread,  
 Her shopping-bonnet sagging to her ears,  
 Her heart too dumb with brokenness for fears.  
 The nightmare whickering with the laugh of death  
 Could not have added terror to her breath.

She reached the house, and: "I'm all right," said she.  
 "I'll just take off my things; but I'm all right,  
 I'd be all right with just a cup of tea,  
 If I could only get this grate to light,  
 The paper 's damp and Jimmy 's late to-night,  
 'Belov'd, if I was rich,' was what he said,  
 O Jim, I wish that God would kill me dead."

While she was blinking at the unlit grate,  
Scratching the moistened match-heads off the wood,  
She heard Jim coming, so she reached his plate,  
And forked the over-frizzled scraps of food.  
"You're late," she said, "and this yer isn't good,  
Whatever makes you come in late like this?"  
"I've been to Plaister's End, that's how it is."

"You've been to Plaister's End?"

"Yes."

"I've been staying

For money for the shopping ever so.  
Down here we can't get victuals without paying,  
There's no trust down the Bye Street, as you know,  
And now it's dark and it's too late to go.  
You've been to Plaister's End. What took you there?"  
"The lady who was with us at the fair."

"The lady, eh? The lady?"

"Yes, the lady."

"You've been to see her?"

"Yes."

"What happened then?"

"I saw her."

"Yes. And what filth did she trade yer?

Or d'you expect your locket back agen?  
I know the rotten ways of whores with men.  
What did it cost yer?"

"What did what cost?"

"It.

Your devil's penny for the devil's bit."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Jimmy, my own,

Don't lie to mother, boy, for mother knows.  
I know you and that lady to the bone,  
And she's a whore, that thing you call a rose,  
A whore who takes whatever male thing goes;  
A harlot with the devil's skill to tell  
The special key of each man's door to hell."



People in love cannot be won by kindness,  
 And opposition makes them feel like martyrs.  
 When folk are crazy with a drunken blindness,  
 It 's best to flog them with each other 's garters,  
 And have the flogging done by Shropshire carters,  
 Born under Ercall where the white stones lie;  
 Ercall that smells of honey in July.

Jimmy said nothing in reply, but thought  
 That mother was an old, hard jealous thing.  
 "I'll love my girl through good and ill report,  
 I shall be true whatever grief it bring."  
 And in his heart he heard the death-bell ring  
 For mother's death, and thought what it would be  
 To bury her in churchyard and be free.

He saw the narrow grave under the wall,  
 Home without mother nagging at his dear,  
 And Anna there with him at evenfall,  
 Bidding him dry his eyes and be of cheer.  
 "The death that took poor mother brings me near,  
 Nearer than we have ever been before,  
 Near as the dead one came, but dearer, more."

"Good-night, my son," said mother. "Night," he said.  
 He dabbed her brow wi's lips and blew the light,  
 She lay quite silent crying on the bed,  
 Stirring no limb, but crying through the night.  
 He slept, convinced that he was Anna's knight.  
 And when he went to work he left behind  
 Money for mother crying herself blind.

After that night he came to Anna's call,  
 He was a fly in Anna's subtle weavings,  
 Mother had no more share in him at all;  
 All that the mother had was Anna's leavings.  
 There were more lies, more lockets, more deceivings,  
 Taunts from the proud old woman, lies from him,  
 And Anna's coo of "Cruel. Leave her, Jim."

Also the foreman spoke: "You make me sick,  
 You come-day-go-day-God-send-plenty-beer.  
 You put less mizzle on your bit of Dick,  
 Or get your time, I'll have no slackers here,  
 I've had my eye on you too long, my dear."  
 And Jimmy pondered while the man attacked,  
 "I'd see her all day long if I were sacked."

And trembling mother thought, "I'll go to see 'r.  
 She'd give me back my boy if she were told  
 Just what he is to me, my pretty dear:  
 She wouldn't leave me starving in the cold,  
 Like what I am." But she was weak and old.  
 She thought, "But if I ast her, I'm afraid  
 He'd hate me ever after," so she stayed.

## IV

BESSIE, the gipsy, got with child by Ern,  
 She joined her tribe again at Shepherd's Meen,  
 In that old quarry overgrown with fern,  
 Where goats are tethered on the patch of green.  
 There she reflected on the fool she'd been,  
 And plaited kipes and waited for the bastard,  
 And thought that love was glorious while it lasted.

And Ern the moody man went moody home,  
 To that most gentle girl from Ercall Hill,  
 And bade her take a heed now he had come,  
 Or else, by cripes, he'd put her through the mill.  
 He didn't want her love, he'd had his fill,  
 Thank you, of her, the bread and butter sack.  
 And Anna heard that Shepherd Ern was back

"Back. And I'll have him back to me," she muttered.  
 "This lovesick boy of twenty, green as grass,  
 Has made me wonder if my brains are buttered,  
 He, and his locket, and his love, the ass.  
 I don't know why he comes. Alas! alas!  
 God knows I want no love; but every sun  
 I bolt my doors on some poor loving one.

## 112 THE WIDOW IN THE BYE STREET

"It breaks my heart to turn them out of doors,  
 I hear them crying to me in the rain;  
 One, with a white face, curses, one implores,  
 'Anna, for God's sake, let me in again,  
 Anna, belov'd, I cannot bear the pain.'  
 Like hoovey sheep bleating outside a fold  
 'Anna, belov'd, I'm in the wind and cold.'

"I want no men. I'm weary to the soul  
 Of men like moths about a candle flame,  
 Of men like flies about a sugar bowl,  
 Acting alike, and all wanting the same.  
 My dreamed-of swirl of passion never came,  
 No man has given me the love I dreamed,  
 But in the best of each one something gleamed.

"If my dear darling were alive, but he . . .  
 He was the same; he didn't understand.  
 The eyes of that dead child are haunting me,  
 I only turned the blanket with my hand.  
 It didn't hurt, he died as I had planned.  
 A little skinny creature, weak and red;  
 It looked so peaceful after it was dead.

"I have been all alone, in spite of all.  
 Never a light to help me place my feet:  
 I have had many a pain and many a fall.  
 Life's a long headache in a noisy street,  
 Love at the budding looks so very sweet,  
 Men put such bright disguises on their lust,  
 And then it all goes crumble into dust.

"Jimmy the same, dear, lovely Jimmy, too,  
 He goes the self-same way the others went,  
 I shall bring sorrow to those eyes of blue.  
 He asks the love I'm sure I never meant.  
 Am I to blame? And all his money spent.  
 Men make this shutting doors such cruel pain,  
 O, Ern, I want you in my life again."

## THE WIDOW IN THE BYE STREET 113

On Sunday afternoons the lovers walk  
Arm within arm, dressed in their Sunday best,  
The man with the blue necktie sucks a stalk,  
The woman answers when she is addressed.  
On quiet country stiles they sit to rest,  
And after fifty years of wear and tear  
They think how beautiful their courtships were.

Jimmy and Anna met to walk together  
The Sunday after Shepherd Ern returned;  
And Anna's hat was lovely with a feather  
Bought and dyed blue with money Jimmy earned.  
They walked towards Callow's Farm, and Anna yearned:  
"Dear boy," she said, "this road is dull to-day,  
Suppose we turn and walk the other way."

They turned, she sighed. "What makes you sigh?" he asked,  
"Thinking," she said, "thinking and grieving, too.  
Perhaps some wicked woman will come masked  
Into your life, my dear, to ruin you.  
And trusting every woman as you do  
It might mean death to love and be deceived;  
You'd take it hard, I thought, and so I grieved."

"Dear one, dear Anna." "O my lovely boy,  
Life is all golden to the finger tips.  
What will be must be: but to-day's a joy.  
Reach me that lovely branch of scarlet hips."  
He reached and gave; she put it to her lips.  
"And here," she said, "we come to Plaister Turns,"  
And then she chose the road to Shepherd Ern's.

As the deft angler, when the fishes rise,  
Flicks on the broadening circle over each  
The delicatest touch of dropping flies,  
Then pulls more line and whips a longer reach,  
Longing to feel the rod bend, the reel screech,  
And the quick comrade net the monster out,  
So Anna played the fly over her trout.

Twice she passed, thrice, she with the boy beside her,  
 A lovely fly, hooked for a human heart,  
 She passed his little gate, while Jimmy eyed her,  
 Feeling her beauty tear his soul apart:  
 Then did the great trout rise, the great pike dart,  
 The gate went clack, a man came up the hill,  
 The lucky strike had hooked him through the gill.

Her breath comes quick, her tired beauty glows.  
 She would not look behind, she looked ahead.  
 It seemed to Jimmy she was like a rose,  
 A golden white rose faintly flushed with red.  
 Her eyes danced quicker at the approaching tread,  
 Her finger nails dug sharp into her palm.  
 She yearned to Jimmy's shoulder, and kept calm.

"Evening," said Shepherd Ern. She turned and eyed him  
 Cold and surprised, but interested too,  
 To see how much he felt the hook inside him,  
 And how much he surmised, and Jimmy knew,  
 And if her beauty still could make him do  
 The love tricks he had gambolled in the past.  
 A glow shot through her that her fish was grassed.

"Evening," she said. "Good evening." Jimmy felt  
 Jealous and angry at the shepherd's tone;  
 He longed to hit the fellow's nose a belt,  
 He wanted his beloved his alone.  
 A fellow's girl should be a fellow's own.  
 Ern gave the lad a glance and turned to Anna,  
 Jim might have been in China by his manner.

"Still walking out?" "As you are." "T'll be bound."  
 "Can you talk gipsy yet, or plait a kipe?"  
 "T'll teach you if I can when I come round."  
 "And when will that be?" "When the time is ripe."  
 And Jimmy longed to hit the man a swipe  
 Under the chin to knock him out of time,  
 But Anna stayed: she still had twigs to lime.

"Come, Anna, come, my dear," he muttered low.  
 She frowned, and blinked and spoke again to Ern.  
 "I hear the gipsy has a row to hoe."  
 "The more you hear," he said, "the less you'll learn."  
 "We've just come out," she said, "to take a turn;  
 Suppose you come along: the more the merrier."  
 "All right," he said, "but how about the terrier?"

He cocked an eye at Jimmy. "Does he bite?"  
 Jimmy blushed scarlet. "He's a dear," said she.  
 Ern walked a step, "Will you be in to-night?"  
 She shook her head, "I doubt if that may be.  
 Jim, here's a friend who wants to talk to me,  
 So will you go and come another day?"  
 "By crimes, I won't!" said Jimmy, "I shall stay."

"I thought he bit," said Ern, and Anna smiled,  
 And Jimmy saw the smile and watched her face  
 While all the jealous devils made him wild;  
 A third in love is always out of place;  
 And then her gentle body full of grace  
 Leaned to him sweetly as she tossed her head,  
 "Perhaps we two 'll be getting on," she said.

They walked, but Jimmy turned to watch the third.  
 "I'm here, not you," he said; the shepherd grinned:  
 Anna was smiling sweet without a word;  
 She got the scarlet berry branch unpinned.  
 "It's cold," she said, "this evening, in the wind."  
 A quick glance showed that Jimmy didn't mind her,  
 She beckoned with the berry branch behind her.

Then dropped it gently on the broken stones,  
 Preoccupied, unheeding, walking straight,  
 Saying "You jealous boy," in even tones,  
 Looking so beautiful, so delicate,  
 Being so very sweet: but at her gate  
 She felt her shoe unlaced and looked to know  
 If Ern had taken up the sprig or no.

He had, she smiled. "Anna," said Jimmy sadly,  
 "That man 's not fit to be a friend of yourn,  
 He 's nobbut just an oaf; I love you madly,  
 And hearing you speak kind to 'm made me burn.  
 Who is he then?" She answered "Shepherd Ern,  
 A pleasant man, an old, old friend of mine."  
 "By cripes, then, Anna, drop him, he 's a swine."

"Jimmy," she said, "you must have faith in me,  
 Faith 's all the battle in a love like ours.  
 You must believe, my darling, don't you see,  
 That life to have its sweets must have its sour.  
 Love isn't always two souls picking flowers.  
 You must have faith. I give you all I can.  
 What, can't I say 'Good evening' to a man?"

"Yes," he replied, "but not a man like him."  
 "Why not a man like him?" she said. "What next?"  
 By this they'd reached her cottage in the dim,  
 Among the daisies that the cold had kexed.  
 "Because I say. Now Anna, don't be vexed."  
 "I'm more than vexed," she said, "with words like these.  
 'You say,' indeed! How dare you! Leave me, please."

"Anna, my Anna." "Leave me." She was cold,  
 Proud and imperious with a lifting lip,  
 Blazing within, but outwardly controlled;  
 He had a colt's first instant of the whip.  
 The long lash curled to cut a second strip.  
 "You to presume to teach! Of course, I know.  
 You're mother's Sunday scholar, aren't you? Go."

She slammed the door behind her, clutching skirts.  
 "Anna." He heard her bedroom latches thud.  
 He learned at last how bitterly love hurts;  
 He longed to cut her throat and see her blood,  
 To stamp her blinking eyeballs into mud.  
 "Anna, by God!" Love's many torments make  
 That tune soon change to "Dear, for Jesus' sake."

He beat the door for her. She never stirred,  
 But, primming bitter lips before her glass,  
 Admired her hat as though she hadn't heard,  
 And tried her front hair parted, and in mass.  
 She heard her lover's hasty footsteps pass.  
 "He's gone," she thought. She crouched below the pane,  
 And heard him cursing as he tramped the lane.

Rage ran in Jimmy as he tramped the night;  
 Rage, strongly mingled with a youth's disgust  
 At finding a beloved woman light,  
 And all her precious beauty dirty dust;  
 A tinsel-varnish gilded over lust.  
 Nothing but that. He sat him down to rage,  
 Beside the stream whose waters never age.

Plashing, it slithered down the tiny fall  
 To eddy wrinkles in the trembling pool  
 With that light voice whose music cannot pall,  
 Always the note of solace, flute-like, cool.  
 And when hot-headed man has been a fool,  
 He could not do a wiser thing than go  
 To that dim pool where purple teazles grow.

He glowered there until suspicion came,  
 Suspicion, anger's bastard, with mean tongue,  
 To mutter to him till his heart was flame,  
 And every fibre of his soul was wrung,  
 That even then Ern and his Anna clung  
 Mouth against mouth in passionate embrace.  
 There was no peace for Jimmy in the place.

Raging he hurried back to learn the truth.  
 The little swinging wicket glimmered white,  
 The chimney jagged the skyline like a tooth,  
 Bells came in swoons for it was Sunday night.  
 The garden was all dark, but there was light  
 Up in the little room where Anna slept:  
 The hot blood beat his brain; he crept, he crept,



Clutching himself to hear, clutching to know,  
 Along the path, rustling with withered leaves,  
 Up to the apple, too decayed to blow,  
 Which crooked a palsied finger at the eaves,  
 And up the lichened trunk his body heaves.  
 Dust blinded him, twigs snapped, the branches shook,  
 He leaned along a mossy bough to look.

Nothing at first, except a guttering candle  
 Shaking amazing shadows on the ceiling,  
 Then Anna's voice upon a bar of "Randal,  
 Where have you been?" and voice and music reeling,  
 Trembling, as though she sang with flooding feeling.  
 The singing stopped midway upon the stair,  
 Then Anna showed in white with loosened hair.

Her back was towards him, and she stood awhile,  
 Like a wild creature tossing back her mane,  
 And then her head went back, he saw a smile  
 On the half face half turned towards the pane;  
 Her eyes closed, and her arms went out again.  
 Jim gritted teeth, and called upon his Maker,  
 She drooped into a man's arms there to take her.

Agony first, sharp, sudden, like a knife,  
 Then down the tree to batter at the door;  
 "Open there. Let me in. I'll have your life.  
 You Jezebel of hell, you painted whore,  
 Talk about faith, I'll give you faith galore."  
 The window creaked, a jug of water came  
 Over his head and neck with certain aim.

"Clear out," said Ern; "I'm here, not you, to-night,  
 Clear out. We whip young puppies when they yap."  
 "If you're a man," said Jim, "come down and fight,  
 I'll put a stopper on your ugly chap."  
 "Go home," said Ern; "Go home and get your pap.  
 To kennel, pup, and bid your mother bake  
 Some soothing syrup in your puppy cake."

There was a dibble sticking in the bed,  
 Jim wrenched it out and swung it swiftly round,  
 And sent it flying at the shepherd's head:  
 "I'll give you puppy cake. Take that, you hound."  
 The broken glass went clinking to the ground,  
 The dibble balanced, checked, and followed flat.  
 "My God," said Ern, "I'll give you hell for that."

He flung the door ajar with "Now, my pup—  
 Hold up the candle, Anna—now, we'll see."  
 "By crimes, come on," said Jimmy; "put them up.  
 Come, put them up, you coward, here I be."  
 And Jim, eleven stone, what chance had he  
 Against fourteen? but what he could he did;  
 Ern swung his right: "That settles you, my kid."

Jimmy went down and out: "The kid," said Ern.  
 "A kid, a sucking puppy; hold the light."  
 And Anna smiled: "It gave me such a turn,  
 You look so splendid, Ernie, when you fight."  
 She looked at Jim with: "Ern, is he all right?"  
 "He's coming to." She shuddered, "Pah, the brute,  
 What things he said"; she stirred him with her foot.

"You go inside," said Ern, "and bolt the door,  
 I'll deal with him." She went and Jimmy stood.  
 "Now, pup," said Ern, "don't come round here no more.  
 I'm here, not you, let that be understood.  
 I tell you frankly, pup, for your own good."  
 "Give me my hat," said Jim. He passed the gate,  
 And as he tottered off he called, "You wait."

"Thanks, I don't have to," Shepherd Ern replied;  
 "You'll do whatever waiting's being done."  
 The door closed gently as he went inside,  
 The bolts jarred in the channels one by one.  
 "I'll give you throwing bats about, my son.  
 Anna." "My dear?" "Where are you?" "Come and find."  
 The light went out, the windows stared out blind—

Blind as blind eyes forever seeing dark.  
 And in the dim the lovers went upstairs,  
 Her eyes fast closed, the shepherd's burning stark,  
 His lips entangled in her straying hairs,  
 Breath coming short as in a convert's prayers,  
 Her stealthy face all drowsy in the dim  
 And full of shudders as she yearned to him.

Jim crossed the water, cursing in his tears,  
 "By cripes, you wait. My God, he's with her now  
 And all her hair pulled down over her ears;  
 Loving the blaggard like a filthy sow,  
 I saw her kiss him from the apple bough.  
 They say a whore is always full of wiles.  
 O God, how sweet her eyes are when she smiles!

"Curse her and curse her. No, my God, she's sweet  
 It's all a helly nightmare. I shall wake.  
 If it were all a dream I'd kiss her feet.  
 I wish it were a dream for Jesus' sake.  
 One thing: I bet I made his guzzle ache,  
 I cop it fair before he sent me down,  
 I'll cop him yet some evening on the crown.

"O God, O God, what pretty ways she had!  
 He's kissing all her skin, so white and soft.  
 She's kissing back. I think I'm going mad.  
 Like rutting rattens in the apple loft.  
 She held that light she carried high aloft  
 Full in my eyes for him to hit me by.  
 I had the light all dazzling in my eye.

"She had her dress all clutched up to her shoulder,  
 And all her naked arm was all one gleam.  
 It's going to freeze to-night, it's turning colder.  
 I wish there was more water in the stream,  
 I'd drown myself. Perhaps it's all a dream,  
 And by and by I'll wake and find it stuff;  
 By crimes, the pain I suffer's real enough."

About two hundred yards from Gunder Loss  
 He stopped to shudder, leaning on the gate,  
 He bit the touchwood underneath the moss;  
 "Rotten, like her," he muttered in his hate;  
 He spat it out again with "But, you wait,  
 We'll see again, before to-morrow's past,  
 In this life he laughs longest who laughs last."

All through the night the stream ran to the sea,  
 The different water always saying the same,  
 Cat-like, and then a tinkle, never glee,  
 A lonely little child alone in shame.  
 An otter snapped a thorn twig when he came,  
 It drifted down, it passed the Hazel Mill,  
 It passed the Springs; but Jimmy stayed there still.

Over the pointed hill-top came the light,  
 Out of the mists on Ercall came the sun,  
 Red like a huntsman hallowing after night,  
 Blowing a horn to rouse up everyone;  
 Through many glittering cities he had run,  
 Splashing the wind vanes on the dewy roofs  
 With golden sparks struck by his horses' hoofs.

The watchman rose, rubbing his rusty eyes,  
 He stirred the pot of cocoa for his mate;  
 The fireman watched his head of power rise.  
 "What time?" he asked. "You haven't long to wait."  
 "Now, is it time?" "Yes. Let her ripple." Straight  
 The whistle shrieked its message, "Up to work!  
 Up, or be fined a quarter if you shirk."

Hearing the whistle, Jimmy raised his head,  
 "The warning call, and me in Sunday clothes;  
 I'd better go; I've time. The sun looks red,  
 I feel so stiff I'm very nearly froze."  
 So over brook and through the fields he goes,  
 And up the line among the navvies' smiles,  
 "Young Jimmy Gurney's been upon the tiles."

The second whistle blew and work began,  
 Jimmy worked too, not knowing what he did,  
 He tripped and stumbled like a drunken man;  
 He muddled all, whatever he was bid,  
 The foreman cursed, "Good God, what ails the kid?  
 Hil Gurney. You. We'll have you crocking soon,  
 You take a lie down till the afternoon."

"I won't," he answered. "Why the devil should I  
 I'm here, I mean to work. I do my piece,  
 Or would do if a man could, but how could I  
 When you come nagging round and never cease?  
 Well, take the job and give me my release.  
 I want the sack, now give it, there 's my pick;  
 Give me the sack." The sack was given quick.

## v

DULLY he got his time-check from the keeper.  
 "Curse her," he said; "and that 's the end of whores"—  
 He stumbled drunkenly across a sleeper—  
 "Give all you have and get kicked out a-doors."  
 He cashed his time-check at the station stores.  
 "Bett'ring yourself, I hope, Jim," said the master;  
 "That 's it," said Jim; "and so I will do, blast her."

Beyond the bridge, a sharp turn to the right  
 Leads to "The Bull and Boar," the carters' rest;  
 An inn so hidden it is out of sight  
 To anyone not coming from the west,  
 The high embankment hides it with its crest.  
 Far up above the Chester trains go by,  
 The drinkers see them sweep against the sky.

Canal men used it when the barges came,  
 The navvies used it when the line was making;  
 The pigeons strut and sidle, ruffling, tame,  
 The chuckling brook in front sets shadows shaking.  
 Cider and beer for thirsty workers' slaking,  
 A quiet house; like all that God controls,  
 It is Fate's instrument on human souls.

Thither Jim turned. "And now I'll drink," he said.  
 "I'll drink and drink—I never did before—  
 I'll drink and drink until I'm mad or dead,  
 For that 's what comes of meddling with a whore."  
 He called for liquor at "The Bull and Boar";  
 Moody he drank; the woman asked him why:  
 "Have you had trouble?" "No," he said, "I'm dry."

"Dry and burnt up, so give 's another drink;  
 That 's better, that 's much better, that 's the sort."  
 And then he sang, so that he should not think,  
 His Binger-Bopper song, but cut it short.  
 His wits were working like a brewer's wort  
 Until among them came the vision gleaming  
 Of Ern with bloody nose and Anna screaming.

"That 's what I'll do," he muttered; "knock him out  
 And kick his face in with a running jump.  
 I'll not have dazzled eyes this second bout,  
 And she can wash the fragments under pump."  
 It was his ace; but Death had played a trump.  
 Death the blind beggar chuckled, nodding dumb,  
 "My game; the shroud is ready, Jimmy—come."

Meanwhile, the mother, waiting for her child,  
 Had tottered out a dozen times to search.  
 "Jimmy," she said, "you'll drive your mother wild;  
 Your father's name 's too good a name to smirch,  
 Come home, my dear, she'll leave you in the lurch;  
 He was so good, my little Jim, so clever;  
 He never stop a night away, not ever.

"He never slept a night away till now,  
 Never, not once, in all the time he's been.  
 It 's the Lord's will, they say, and we must bow,  
 But O it 's like a knife, it cuts so keen!  
 He'll work in 's Sunday clothes, it'll be seen,  
 And then they'll laugh, and say 'It isn't strange;  
 He slept with her, and so he couldn't change.'

"Perhaps," she thought, "I'm wrong; perhaps he 's dead;  
 Killed himself like; folk do in love, they say.  
 He never tells what passes in his head,  
 And he 's been looking late so old and grey.  
 A railway train has cut his head away,  
 Like the poor hare we found at Maylow's shack.  
 O God have pity, bring my darling back!"

All the high stars went sweeping through the sky,  
 The sun made all the orient clean, clear gold,  
 "O blessed God," she prayed, "do let me die,  
 Or bring my wand'ring lamb back into fold.  
 The whistle 's gone, and all the bacon 's cold;  
 I must know somehow if he 's on the line,  
 He could have bacon sandwich when he dine."

She cut the bread, and started, short of breath,  
 Up the canal now draining for the rail;  
 A poor old woman pitted against death,  
 Bringing her pennyworth of love for bail.  
 Wisdom, beauty, and love may not avail.  
 She was too late. "Yes, he was here; oh, yes.  
 He chucked his job and went." "Where?" "Home, I guess."

"Home, but he hasn't been home." "Well, he went.  
 Perhaps you missed him, mother." "Or perhaps  
 He took the field path yonder through the bent.  
 He very likely done that, don't he, chaps?"  
 The speaker tested both his trouser straps  
 And took his pick. "He 's in the town," he said.  
 "He'll be all right, after a bit in bed."

She trembled down the high embankment's ridge  
 Glad, though too late; not yet too late, indeed.  
 For forty yards away, beyond the bridge,  
 Jimmy still drank, the devil still sowed seed.  
 "A bit in bed," she thought, "is what I need.  
 I'll go to 'Bull and Boar' and rest a bit,  
 They've got a bench outside; they'd let me sit."

Even as two soldiers on a fortress wall  
 See the bright fire streak of a coming shell,  
 Catch breath, and wonder "Which way will it fall?  
 To you? to me? or will it all be well?"  
 Ev'n so stood life and death, and could not tell  
 Whether she'd go to th' inn and find her son,  
 Or take the field and let the doom be done.

"No, not the inn," she thought. "People would talk.  
 I couldn't in the open daytime; no.  
 I'll just sit here upon the timber balk,  
 I'll rest for just a minute and then go."  
 Resting, her old tired heart began to glow,  
 Glowed and gave thanks, and thought itself in clover,  
 "He's lost his job, so now she'll throw him over."

Sitting, she saw the rustling thistle-kex,  
 The picks flash bright above, the trollies tip,  
 The bridge-stone shining, full of silver specks,  
 And three swift children running down the dip.  
 A Stoke Saint Michael carter cracked his whip,  
 The water in the runway made its din.  
 She half heard singing coming from the inn.

She turned, and left the inn, and took the path,  
 And "Brother Life, you lose," said Brother Death,  
 "Even as the Lord of all appointed hath  
 In this great miracle of blood and breath."  
 He doeth all things well as the book saith,  
 He bids the changing stars fulfil their turn,  
 His hand is on us when we least discern.

Slowly she tottered, stopping with the stitch,  
 Catching her breath, "O lawks, a dear, a dear.  
 How the poor tubings in my heart do twitch,  
 It hurts like the rheumatics very near."  
 And every painful footstep drew her clear  
 From that young life she bore with so much pain.  
 She never had him to herself again.



Out of the inn came Jimmy, red with drink,  
 Crying: "I'll show her. Wait a bit. I'll show her.  
 You wait a bit. I'm not the kid you think.  
 I'm Jimmy Gurney, champion tupper-thrower,  
 When I get done with her you'll never know her,  
 Nor him you won't. Out of my way, you fowls,  
 Or else I'll rip the red things off your jowls."

He went across the fields to Plaister's End.  
 There was a lot of water in the brook,  
 Sun and white cloud and weather on the mend  
 For any man with any eyes to look.  
 He found old Callow's plough-bat, which he took,  
 "My innings now, my pretty dear," said he.  
 "You wait a bit. I'll show you. Now you'll see."

Her chimney smoke was blowing blue and faint,  
 The wise duck shook a tail across the pool,  
 The blacksmith's shanty smelt of burning paint,  
 Four newly-tired cartwheels hung to cool.  
 He had loved the place when under Anna's rule.  
 Now he clenched teeth and flung aside the gate,  
 There at the door they stood. He grinned. "Now wait."

Ern had just brought her in a wired hare,  
 She stood beside him stroking down the fur.  
 "Oh, Ern, poor thing, look how its eyes do stare,"  
 "It isn't *it*," he answered. "It's a her."  
 She stroked the breast and plucked away a bur,  
 She kissed the pads, and leapt back with a shout,  
 "My God, he's got the spudder. Ern. Look out."

Ern clenched his fists. Too late. He felt no pain,  
 Only incredible haste in something swift,  
 A shock that made the sky black on his brain,  
 Then stillness, while a little cloud went drift.  
 The weight upon his thigh bones wouldn't lift;  
 Then poultry in a long procession came,  
 Grey-legged, doing the goose-step, eyes like flame.

Grey-legged old cocks and hens sedate in age,  
 Marching with jerks as though they moved on springs,  
 With sidelong hate in round eyes red with rage,  
 And shouldered muskets clipped by jealous wings,  
 Then an array of horns and stupid things:  
 Sheep on a hill with harebells, hare for dinner.  
 "Hare." A slow darkness covered up the sinner.

"But little time is right hand fain of blow."  
 Only a second changes life to death;  
 Hate ends before the pulses cease to go,  
 There is great power in the stop of breath.  
 There's too great truth in what the dumb thing saith,  
 Hate never goes so far as that, nor can.  
 "I am what life becomes. D'you hate me, man?"

Hate with his babbling instant, red and damning,  
 Passed with his instant, having drunken red.  
 "You've killed him."

"No, I've not, he's only shamming  
 Get up." "He can't." "O God, he isn't dead."  
 "O God." "Here. Get a basin. Bathe his head.  
 Ernie, for God's sake, what are you playing at?  
 I only give him one like, with the bat."

Man cannot call the brimming instant back;  
 Time's an affair of instants spun to days;  
 If man must make an instant gold, or black,  
 Let him, he may, but Time must go his ways.  
 Life may be duller for an instant's blaze.  
 Life's an affair of instants spun to years,  
 Instants are only cause of all these tears.

Then Anna screamed aloud. "Help. Murder. Murder."  
 "By God, it is," he said. "Through you, you slut."  
 Backing, she screamed, until the blacksmith heard her.  
 "Hurry," they cried, "the woman's throat's being cut."  
 Jim had his coat off by the water butt.  
 "He might come to," he said, "with wine or soup.  
 I only hit him once, like, with the scoop.

"Splash water on him, chaps. I only meant  
To hit him just a clip, like, nothing more.  
There. Look. He isn't dead, his eyelids went.  
And he went down. O God, his head 's all tore.  
I've washed and washed: it 's all one gob of gore.  
He don't look dead to you? What? Nor to you?  
Not kill, the clip I give him, couldn't do."

"God send; he looks damn bad," the blacksmith said.  
"Py Cot," his mate said, "she wass altogether;  
She hass an illness look of peing ted."  
"Here. Get a glass," the smith said, "and a feather."  
"Wass you at fightings or at playings whether?"  
"Here, get a glass and feather. Quick 's the word."  
The glass was clear. The feather never stirred.

"By God, I'm sorry, Jim. That settles it."  
"By God. I've killed him then." "The doctor might."  
"Try, if you like; but that 's a nasty hit."  
"Doctor's gone by. He won't be back till night."  
"Py Cot, the feather was not looking right."  
"By Jesus, chaps, I never meant to kill 'un.  
Only to bat. I'll go to p'leece and tell 'un.

"O Ern, for God's sake speak, for God's sake speak."  
No answer followed: Ern had done with dust,  
"The p'leece is best," the smith said, "or a beak.  
I'll come along; and so the lady must.  
Evans, you bring the lady, will you just?  
Tell 'em just how it come, lad. Come your ways;  
And Joe, you watch the body where it lays."

They walked to town, Jim on the blacksmith's arm.  
Jimmy was crying like a child, and saying,  
"I never meant to do him any harm."  
His teeth went clack, like bones at murmurs playing,  
And then he trembled hard and broke out praying,  
"God help my poor old mother. If he 's dead,  
I've brought her my last wages home," he said.

He trod his last free journey down the street;  
 Treading the middle road, and seeing both sides,  
 The school, the inns, the butchers selling meat,  
 The busy market where the town divides.  
 Then past the tanpits full of stinking hides,  
 And up the lane to death, as weak as pith.  
 "By God, I hate this, Jimmy," said the smith.

## VI

ANNA in black, the judge in scarlet robes,  
 A fuss of lawyers' people coming, going,  
 The windows shut, the gas alight in globes,  
 Evening outside, and pleasant weather blowing.  
 "They'll hang him?" "I suppose so; there 's no knowing."  
 "A pretty piece, the woman, ain't she, John?  
 He killed the fellow just for carrying on."

"She give her piece to counsel pretty clear."  
 "Ah, that she did, and when she stop she smiled."  
 "She 's had a-many men, that pretty dear;  
 She 's drove a-many pretty fellows wild."  
 "More silly idiots they to be beguiled."  
 "Well, I don't know." "Well, I do. See her eyes?  
 Mystery, eh? A woman's mystery 's lies."

"Perhaps." "No p'raps about it, that 's the truth.  
 I know these women; they're a rotten lot."  
 "You didn't use to think so in your youth."  
 "No; but I'm wiser now, and not so hot.  
 Married or buried, I say, wives or shot,  
 These unmanned, unattached Maries and Susans  
 Make life no better than a proper nuisance."

"Well, I don't know." "Well, if you don't you will."  
 "I look on women as as good as men."  
 "Now, that 's the kind of talk that makes me ill.  
 When have they been as good? I ask you when?"  
 "Always they have." "They haven't. Now and then  
 P'raps one or two was neither hen nor fury."  
 "One for your mother, that. Here comes the jury."

Guilty. Thumbs down. No hope. The judge passed sentence;  
 "A frantic passionate youth, unfit for life,  
 A fitting time afforded for repentance,  
 Then certain justice with a pitiless knife.  
 For her his wretched victim's widowed wife,  
 Pity. For her who bore him, pity. (Cheers.)  
 The jury were exempt for seven years."

All bowed; the Judge passed to the robing room,  
 Dismissed his clerks, disrobed, and knelt and prayed  
 As was his custom after passing doom,  
 Doom upon life, upon the thing not made.  
 "O God, who made us out of dust, and laid  
 Thee in us bright, to lead us to the truth,  
 O God, have pity upon this poor youth.

"Show him Thy grace, O God, before he die;  
 Shine in his heart; have mercy upon me,  
 Who deal the laws men make to travel by  
 Under the sun upon the path to Thee;  
 O God, Thou knowest I'm as blind as he,  
 As blind, as frantic, not so single, worse,  
 Only Thy pity spared me from the curse.

"Thy pity, and Thy mercy, God, did save,  
 Thy bounteous gifts, not any grace of mine,  
 From all the pitfalls leading to the grave,  
 From all the death-feasts with the husks and swine.  
 God, who hast given me all things, now make shine  
 Bright in this sinner's heart that he may see.  
 God, take this poor boy's spirit back to Thee."

Then trembling with his hands, for he was old,  
 He went to meet his college friend, the Dean,  
 The loiterers watched him as his carriage rolled.  
 "There goes the Judge," said one, and one was keen:  
 "Hanging that wretched boy, that 's where he 's been."  
 A policeman spat, two lawyers talked statistics,  
 "'Crime passionel' in Agricultural Districts."

"They'd oughtn't hang a boy": but one said "Stuff.  
This sentimental talk is rotten, rotten.  
The law 's the law and not half strict enough,  
Forgers and murderers are misbegotten,  
Let them be hanged and let them be forgotten.  
A rotten fool should have a rotten end;  
Mend them, you say? The rotten never mend."

And one "Not mend? The rotten not, perhaps.  
The rotting would; so would the just infected.  
A week in quod has ruined lots of chaps  
Who'd all got good in them till prison wrecked it."  
And one, "Society must be protected."  
"He 's just a kid. She trapped him." "No, she didden.  
"He'll be reprieved." "He mid be and he midden."

So the talk went; and Anna took the train,  
Too sad for tears, and pale; a lady spoke  
Asking if she were ill or suffering pain?  
"Neither," she said; but sorrow made her choke,  
"I'm only sick because my heart is brock,  
My friend, a man, my oldest friend here, died.  
I had to see the man who killed him, tried.

"He 's to be hanged. Only a boy. My friend.  
I thought him just a boy; I didn't know.  
And Ern was killed, and now the boy 's to end,  
And all because he thought he loved me so."  
"My dear," the lady said; and Anna, "Oh.  
It 's very hard to bear the ill men make,  
He thought he loved, and it was all mistake."

"My dear," the lady said; "you poor, poor woman,  
Have you no friends to go to?" "I'm alone.  
I've parents living, but they're both inhuman,  
And none can cure what pierces to the bone.  
I'll have to leave and go where I'm not known.  
Begin my life again." Her friend said "Yes.  
Certainly that. But leave me your address."

"For I might hear of something; I'll enquire,  
 Perhaps the boy might be reprieved or pardoned.  
 Couldn't we ask the rector or the squire  
 To write and ask the Judge? He can't be hardened.  
 What do you do? Is it housework? Have you gardened?  
 Your hands are very white and soft to touch."  
 "Lately I've not had heart for doing much."

So the talk passes as the train descends  
 Into the vale and halts and starts to climb  
 To where the apple-bearing country ends  
 And pleasant-pastured hills rise sweet with thyme,  
 Where clinking sheepbells make a broken chime  
 And sunwarm gorses rich the air with scent  
 And kestrels poise for mice, there Anna went.

There, in the April, in the garden-close,  
 One heard her in the morning singing sweet,  
 Calling the birds from the unbudded rose,  
 Offering her lips with grains for them to eat.  
 The red breasts come with little wiry feet,  
 Sparrows and tits and all wild feathery things,  
 Brushing her lifted face with quivering wings.

Jimmy was taken down into a cell,  
 He did not need a hand, he made no fuss.  
 The men were kind "for what the kid done . . . well  
 The same might come to any one of us."  
 They brought him bits of cake at tea time; thus  
 The love that fashioned all in human ken,  
 Works in the marvellous hearts of simple men.

And in the nights (they watched him night and day)  
 They told him bits of stories through the grating,  
 Of how the game went at the football play,  
 And how the rooks outside had started mating.  
 And all the time they knew the rope was waiting,  
 And every evening friend would say to friend,  
 "I hope we've not to drag him at the end."

And poor old mother came to see her son,  
 "The Lord has gave," she said, "the Lord has took;  
 I loved you very dear, my darling one,  
 And now there's none but God where we can look.  
 We've got God's promise written in His Book,  
 He will not fail; but oh, it do seem hard."  
 She hired a room outside the prison yard.

"Where did you get the money for the room?  
 And how are you living, mother; how'll you live?"  
 "It's what I'd saved to put me in the tomb,  
 I'll want no tomb but what the parish give."  
 "Mother, I lied to you that time, O forgive,  
 I brought home half my wages, half I spent,  
 And you went short that week to pay the rent.

"I went to see 'r, I spent my money on her,  
 And you who bore me paid the cost in pain.  
 You went without to buy the clothes upon her:  
 A hat, a locket, and a silver chain.  
 O mother dear, if all might be again,  
 Only from last October, you and me;  
 O mother dear, how different it would be.

"We were so happy in the room together,  
 Singing at 'Binger-Bopper,' weren't us, just?  
 And going a-hopping in the summer weather,  
 And all the hedges covered white with dust,  
 And blackberries, and that, and traveller's trust.  
 I thought her wronged, and true, and sweet, and wise,  
 The devil takes sweet shapes when he tells lies.

"Mother, my dear, will you forgive your son?"  
 "God knows I do, Jim, I forgive you, dear;  
 You didn't know, and couldn't, what you done.  
 God pity all poor people suffering here,  
 And may His Mercy shine upon us clear,  
 And may we have His Holy Word for mark,  
 To lead us to His Kingdom through the dark."



"Amen." "Amen," said Jimmy; then they kissed.  
 The warders watched, the little larks were singing,  
 A plough team jangled, turning at the rist;  
 Beyond the mild cathedral bells were ringing,  
 The elm-tree rooks were cawing at the springing:  
 O beauty of the time when winter's done,  
 And all the fields are laughing at the sun!

"I s'pose they've brought the line beyond the Knapp?"  
 "Ah, and beyond the Barcle, so they say."  
 "Hearing the rooks begin reminds a chap.  
 Look queer, the street will, with the lock away;  
 O God, I'll never see it." "Let us pray.  
 Don't think of that, but think," the mother said,  
 "Of men going on long after we are dead.

"Red helpless little things will come to birth,  
 And hear the whistles going down the line,  
 And grow up strong and go about the earth,  
 And have much happier times than yours and mine;  
 And some day one of them will get a sign,  
 And talk to folk, and put an end to sin,  
 And then God's blessed kingdom will begin.

"God dropped a spark down into everyone,  
 And if we find and fan it to a blaze  
 It'll spring up and glow like—like the sun,  
 And light the wandering out of stony ways.  
 God warms His hands at man's heart when he prays.  
 And light of prayer is spreading heart to heart;  
 It'll light all where now it lights a part.

"And God who gave His mercies takes His mercies,  
 And God who gives beginning gives the end.  
 I dread my death; but it's the end of curses,  
 A rest for broken things too broke to mend.  
 O Captain Christ, our blessed Lord and Friend,  
 We are two wandered sinners in the mire,  
 Burn our dead hearts with love out of Thy fire.

"And when thy death comes, Master, let us bear it  
 If Thy will, however hard to go;  
 Cross is infinite for us to share it,  
 help is infinite for us to know.  
 When the long trumpets of the Judgment blow  
 Our poor souls be glad and meet agen,  
 And rest in Thee." "Say, 'Amen,' Jim." "Amen."

There was a group outside the prison gate,  
 Awaiting to hear them ring the passing bell,  
 Awaiting as empty people always wait  
 For the strong toxic of another's hell.  
 And mother stood there, too, not seeing well,  
 Praying through tears to let His will be done,  
 And not to hide His mercy from her son.

Talk in the little group was passing quick. ✓  
 "It's nothing now to what it was, to watch."  
 "Poor wretched kid, I bet he's feeling sick."  
 "Eh? What d'you say, chaps? Someone got a match?"  
 "They draw a bolt and drop you down a hatch  
 And break your neck, whereas they used to strangle  
 In olden times, when you could see them dangle."

Some one said "Off hats" when the bell began.  
 Mother was whimpering now upon her knees.  
 A broken ringing like a beaten pan  
 It sent the sparrows wavering to the trees.  
 The wall-top grasses whickered in the breeze,  
 The broken ringing clanged, clattered and clanged  
 As though men's bees were swarming, not men hanged.

Now certain Justice with the pitiless knife.  
 The white sick chaplain snuffing at the nose,  
 "I am the resurrection and the life."  
 The bell still clangs, the small procession goes,  
 The prison warders ready ranged in rows.  
 "Now, Gurney, come, my dear; it's time," they said.  
 And ninety seconds later he was dead.

Some of life's sad ones are too strong to die,  
 Grief doesn't kill them as it kills the weak,  
 Sorrow is not for those who sit and cry  
 Lapped in the love of turning t'other cheek,  
 But for the noble souls austere and bleak  
 Who have had the bitter dose and drained the cup  
 And wait for Death face fronted, standing up.

As the last man upon the sinking ship,  
 Seeing the brine creep brightly on the deck,  
 Hearing aloft the slatting topsails rip,  
 Ripping to rags among the topmast's wreck,  
 Yet hoists the new red ensign without speck,  
 That she, so fair, may sink with colours flying,  
 Soth going on long after kept from dying.

"Red helpless little things will coe little room,  
 And hear the whistles going down life;  
 And grow up strong and go about 'nd in the gloom;  
 And have much happier times than yed wife;  
 And some day one of them will get a always strife,  
 And talk to folk, and put an end to siast.  
 And then God's blessed kingdom will es past.

"God dropped a spark down into ever'ting; eh . . .  
 And if we find and fan it to a blaze  
 It'll spring up and glow like—like the sun, day.  
 And light the wandering out of stony ways,  
 God warms His hands at man's heart when he p  
 And light of prayer is spreading heart to heart;  
 It'll light all where now it lights a part. w.

"And God who gave His mercies takes His merciere;  
 And God who gives beginning gives the end.  
 I dread my death; but it 's the end of curses,  
 A rest for broken things too broke to mend.  
 O Captain Christ, our b'essed Lord and Friend,  
 We are two wandered sinners in the mire,  
 Burn our dead hearts with love out of Thy fire.

"Oh, how his little face come, with bright hair,  
 ear little face. We made this room so snug;  
 le sit beside me in his little chair,  
 give him real tea sometimes in his mug.  
 le liked the velvet in the patchwork rug.  
 le used to stroke it, did my pretty son,  
 He called it Bunny, little Jimmie done.

"And then he ran so, he was strong at running,  
 Always a strong one, like his dad at that.  
 In summertimes I done my sewing sunning,  
 And he'd be sprawling, playing with the cat.  
 And neighbours brought their knitting out to chat  
 Till five o'clock; he had his tea at five;  
 How sweet life was when Jimmy was alive!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Darkness and midnight, and the midnight chimes.  
 Another four-and-twenty hours begin,  
 Darkness again, and many, many times,  
 The alternating light and darkness spin  
 Until the face so thin is still more thin,  
 Gazing each earthly evening wet or fine  
 For Jimmy coming from work along the line.

Over her head the Chester wires hum,  
 Under the bridge the rocking engines flash.  
 "He 's very late this evening, but he'll come  
 And bring his little packet full of cash  
 (Always he does) and supper's cracker hash,  
 That is his favourite food excepting bacon.  
 They say my boy was hanged; but they're mistaken."

And sometimes she will walk the cindery mile,  
 Singing, as she and Jimmy used to do,  
 Singing, "The parson's dog lep over a stile,  
 Along the path where water lilies grew.  
 The stars are placid on the evening's blue,  
 Burning like eyes so calm, so unafraid,  
 On all that God has given and man has made.

Burning they watch, and mothlike owls come out,  
 The redbreast warbles shrilly once and stops;  
 The homing cowman gives his dog a shout,  
 The lamps are lighted in the village shops.  
 Silence; the last bird passes; in the copse  
 The hazels cross the moon, a nightjar spins,  
 Dew wets the grass, the nightingale begins.

Singing her crazy song the mother goes,  
 Singing as though her heart were full of peace,  
 Moths knock the petals from the dropping rose,  
 Stars make the glimmering pool a golden flecce,  
 The moon droops west, but still she does not cease,  
 The little mice peep out to hear her sing,  
 Until the inn-man's cockerel shakes his wing.

And in the sunny dawns of hot Julys,  
 The labourers going to meadow see her there.  
 Rubbing the sleep out of their heavy eyes,  
 They lean upon the parapet to stare;  
 They see her plaiting basil in her hair,  
 Basil, the dark red wound-wort, cops of clover,  
 The blue self-heal and golden Jacks of Dover.

Dully they watch her, then they turn to go  
 To that high Shropshire upland of late hay;  
 Her singing lingers with them as they mow,  
 And many times they try it, now grave, now gay,  
 Till, with full throat over the hills away,  
 They lift it clear; oh, very clear it towers  
 Mixed with the swish of many falling flowers.

DAUBER



## DAUBER

I

I

**F**OUR bells were struck, the watch was called on deck  
All work aboard was over for the hour,  
And some men sang and others played at check,  
Or mended clothes or watched the sunset glower.  
The bursting west was like an opening flower,  
And one man watched it till the light was dim,  
But no one went across to talk to him.

He was the painter in that swift ship's crew—  
Lampman and painter—tall, a slight-built man,  
Young for his years, and not yet twenty-two;  
Sickly, and not yet brown with the sea's tan.  
Bullied and damned at since the voyage began,  
"Being neither man nor seaman by his tally,"  
He bunked with the idlers just abaft the galley.

His work began at five; he worked all day, ✓  
Keeping no watch and having all night in.  
His work was what the mate might care to say;  
He mixed red lead in many a bouilli tin;  
His dungarees were smeared with paraffin.  
"Go drown himself" his round-house mates advised him,  
And all hands called him "Dauber" and despised him.

Si, the apprentice, stood beside the spar, ✕  
Stripped to the waist, a basin at his side,  
Slushing his hands to get away the tar,  
And then he washed himself and rinsed and dried;  
Towelling his face, hair-towzelled, eager-eyed,  
He crossed the spar to Dauber, and there stood  
Watching the gold of heaven turn to blood.



They stood there by the rail while the swift ship  
 Tore on out of the tropics, straining her sheets,  
 Whitening her trackway to a milky strip,  
 Dim with green bubbles and twisted water-meets,  
 Her clacking tackle tugged at pins and cleats,  
 Her great sails bellied stiff, her great masts leaned:  
 They watched how the seas struck and burst and greened.

Si talked with Dauber, standing by the side.  
 "Why did you come to sea, painter?" he said.  
 "I want to be a painter," he replied,  
 "And know the sea and ships from A to Z,  
 And paint great ships at sea before I'm dead;  
 Ships under skysails running down the Trade—  
 Ships and the sea; there 's nothing finer made.

"But there 's so much to learn, with sails and ropes,  
 And how the sails look, full or being furled,  
 And how the lights change in the troughs and slopes,  
 And the sea's colours up and down the world,  
 And how a storm looks when the sprays are hurled  
 High as the yard (they say) I want to see;  
 There 's none ashore can teach such things to me.

"And then the men and rigging, and the way  
 Ships move, running or beating, and the poise  
 At the roll's end, the checking in the sway—  
 I want to paint them perfect, short of the noise;  
 And then the life, the half-decks full of boys,  
 The fo'c's'les with the men there, dripping wet.  
 I know the subjects that I want to get. \

"It's not been done, the sea, not yet been done,  
 From the inside, by one who really knows;  
 I'd give up all if I could be the one,  
 But art comes dear the way the money goes. \  
 So I have come to sea, and I suppose  
 Three years will teach me all I want to learn  
 And make enough to keep me till I earn."

Even as he spoke his busy pencil moved,  
 Drawing the leap of water off the side  
 Where the great clipper trampled iron-hooved,  
 Making the blue hills of the sea divide,  
 Shearing a glittering scatter in her stride,  
 And leaping on full tilt with all sails drawing,  
 Proud as a war-horse, snuffing battle, pawing. got."

"I cannot get it yet—not yet," he said;  
 "That leap and light, and sudden change to greet  
 And all the glittering from the sunset's red,  
 And the milky colours where the bursts have  
 And then the clipper striding like a queen  
 Over it all, all beauty to the crown. they had done,  
 I see it all, I cannot put it down. one.

"It's hard not to be able. It he came to sea,  
 I cannot get the movement of its, they laid them there.  
 Sometimes it almost makes a how mad he'd be  
 To try and try and never get into air.  
 Oh, if I could—oh, if I only feet from everywhere  
 I wouldn't mind what muster in the dark;  
 Not if the whole flowed above, a dim red spark.

Down sank the darkness passed and voices cried;  
 The wind cut, glowed and died, the faces seemed  
 "Out side, remembered when a brain has died,  
 The Roar, all but high intenseness deeply dreamed.  
 "Like hissing spears the fishes' fire streamed,  
 "And on the clipper rushed with tossing mast,  
 Of bath of flame broke round her as she passed.

Dark watch was set, the night came, and the men  
 Bred from the moon in shadowed nooks to sleep,  
 Thence like the dead; still, like the dead, as when  
 The rue in a city leaves none even to weep.  
 The ship's track brightened to a mile-broad sweep;  
 Racer mate there felt her pulse, and eyed the spars;  
 What west by south she staggered under the stars

Just by the round-house door, as it grew dark,  
 The Boatswain caught the Dauber with, "Now, you;  
 Till now I've spared you, damn you! now you hark:  
 I've just had hell for what you didn't do;  
 I'll have you broke and sent among the crew  
 For get me more trouble by a particle.  
 They won't forget, you daubing, useless article!"

"Si talked 't, you twice-laid thing from Port Mahon!"  
 "Why did 'he Cook's "Is that the Dauber there?  
 "I want to bou leave them stinking paints alone?  
 "And know t. house out, poisoning all the air.  
 And paint great out." "Where to?" "I don't care where.  
 Ships under skysaing paint here." From their plates:  
 Ships and the sea; t paint breeds fever," growled his mates.

"But there 's so much to learn, from the berth  
 And how the sails look, full o; deck-house top;  
 And how the lights change in ng with mirth,  
 And the sea's colours up and cng on the strop;  
 And how a storm looks whensky light drop,  
 High as the yard (they say) I want t and lay  
 There 's none ashore can teach such thay.

"And then the men and rigging, and the way  
 Ships move, running or beating, and the pois  
 At the roll's end, the checking in the sway—  
 I want to paint them perfect, short of the noise;  
 And then the life, the half-decks full of boys,  
 The fo'c's'les with the men there, dripping wet.  
 I know the subjects that I want to get."

"It's not been done, the sea, not yet been done,  
 From the inside, by one who really knows;  
 I'd give up all if I could be the one,  
 But art comes dear the way the money goes.  
 So I have come to sea, and I suppose  
 Three years will teach me all I want to learn  
 And make enough to keep me till I earn."

"Now," said the reefer, "up! Come, Sam; come, Si,  
 Dauber's been hiding something." Up they slid,  
 Treading on naked tiptoe stealthily  
 To grope for treasure at the long-boat skid.  
 "Drawings!" said Sam. "Is that what Dauber hid?  
 Lord! I expected pudding, not this rot.  
 Still, come, we'll have some fun with what we've got."

They smeared the paint with turpentine until  
 They could remove with mess-clouts every trace  
 Of quick perception caught by patient skill,  
 And lines that had brought blood into his face.  
 They wiped the pigments off, and did erase,  
 With knives, all sticking clots. When they had done,  
 Under the boat they laid them every one.

All he had drawn since first he came to sea,  
 His six weeks' leisure's fruits, they laid them there.  
 They chuckled then to think how mad he'd be  
 Finding his paintings vanished into air.  
Eight bells were struck, and feet from everywhere  
Went shuffling aft to muster in the dark;  
 The mate's pipe glowed above, a dim red spark.

Names in the darkness passed and voices cried;  
 The red spark glowed and died, the faces seemed  
 As things remembered when a brain has died,  
 To all but high intenseness deeply dreamed.  
 Like hissing spears the fishes' fire streamed,  
 And on the clipper rushed with tossing mast,  
 A bath of flame broke round her as she passed.

The watch was set, the night came, and the men  
 Hid from the moon in shadowed nooks to sleep,  
 Bunched like the dead; still, like the dead, as when  
 Plague in a city leaves none even to weep.  
 The ship's track brightened to a mile-broad sweep;  
 The mate there felt her pulse, and eyed the spars;  
 South-west by south she staggered under the stars

Down in his bunk the Dauber lay awake  
Thinking of his unfitness for the sea.  
Each failure, each derision, each mistake,  
There in the life not made for such as he;  
A morning grim with trouble sure to be,  
A noon of pain from failure, and a night  
Bitter with men's contemning and despite.

This is the first beginning, the green leaf,  
Still in the Trades before bad weather fell;  
What harvest would he reap of hate and grief  
When the loud Horn made every life a hell?  
When the sick ship lay over, clanging her bell,  
And no time came for painting or for drawing,  
But all hands fought, and icy death came clawing?

Hell, he expected,—hell. His eyes grew blind;  
The snoring from his messmates droned and snuffled,  
And then a gush of pity calmed his mind.  
The cruel torment of his thought was muffled,  
Without, on deck, an old, old seaman shuffled,  
Humming his song, and through the open door  
A moonbeam moved and thrust along the floor.

The green bunk curtains moved, the brass rings clicked,  
The Cook cursed in his sleep, turning and turning,  
The moonbeam's moving finger touched and picked,  
And all the stars in all the sky were burning.  
"This is the art I've come for, and am learning,  
The sea and ships and men and travelling things.  
It is most proud, whatever pain it brings."

He leaned upon his arm and watched the light  
Sliding and fading to the steady roll;  
This he would some day paint, the ship at night  
And sleeping seamen tired to the soul;  
The space below the bunks as black as coal,  
Gleams upon chests, upon the unlit lamp,  
The ranging door-hook, and the locker clamp.

This he would paint, and that, and all these scenes,  
And proud ships carrying on, and men their minds,  
And blues of rollers toppling into greens,  
And shattering into white that bursts and blinds,  
And scattering ships running erect like hinds,  
And men in oilskins beating down a sail  
High on the yellow yard, in snow, in hail.

With faces ducked down from the slanting drive  
Of half-thawed hail mixed with half-frozen spray,  
The roaring canvas, like a thing alive,  
Shaking the mast, knocking their hands away  
The foot-ropes jerking to the tug and sway,  
The savage eyes salt-reddened at the rims,  
And icicles on the south-wester brims.

And sunnier scenes would grow under his brush,  
The tropic dawn with all things dropping dew,  
The darkness and the wonder and the hush,  
The insensate grey before the marvel grew;  
Then the veil lifted from the trembling blue,  
The walls of sky burst in, the flower, the rose,  
All the expanse of heaven a mind that glows.

He turned out of his bunk; the Cook still tossed,  
One of the other two spoke in his sleep,  
A cockroach scuttled where the moonbeam crossed;  
Outside there was the ship, the night, the deep.  
"It is worth while," the youth said; "I will keep  
To my resolve, I'll learn to paint all this.  
My Lord, my God, how beautiful it is!"

Outside was the ship's rush to the wind's hurry  
A resonant wire-hum from every rope,  
The broadening bow-wash in a fiery flurry,  
The leaning masts in their majestic slope,  
And all things strange with moonlight: filled with hope  
By all that beauty going as man bade,  
He turned and slept in peace. Eight bells were made.

## II

| NEXT day was Sunday, his free painting day,  
While the fine weather held, from eight till eight.  
He rose when called at five, and did array  
The round-house gear, and set the kit-bags straight  
Then kneeling down, like housemaid at a grate,  
He scrubbed the deck with sand until his knees  
Were blue with dye from his wet dungarees.

Soon all was clean, his Sunday tasks were done;  
His day was clear for painting as he chose.  
The wetted decks were drying in the sun,  
The men coiled up, or swabbed, or sought repose.  
The drifts of silver arrows fell and rose  
As flying fish took wing; the breakfast passed,  
Wasting good time, but he was free at last.

Free for two hours and more to tingle deep,  
Catching a likeness in a line or tint,  
The canvas running up in a proud sweep,  
Wind-wrinkled at the clews, and white like lint,  
The glittering of the blue waves into glint;  
Free to attempt it all, the proud ship's pawings,  
The sea, the sky—he went to fetch his drawings.

Up to the deck-house top he quickly climbed,  
He stooped to find them underneath the boat.  
He found them all obliterated, slimed,  
Blotted, erased, gone from him line and note.  
They were all spoiled: a lump came in his throat,  
Being vain of his attempts, and tender skinned—  
Beneath the skylight watching reefers grinned.

He clambered down, holding the ruined things.  
"Bosun," he called, "look here, did you do these:  
Wipe off my paints and cut them into strings,  
And smear them till you can't tell chalk from cheese?  
Don't stare, but did you do it? Answer, please."  
The Bosun turned: "I'll give you a thick earl  
Do it? I didn't. Get to hell from here!

"I touch your stinking daubs? The Dauber's daft."  
 A crowd was gathering now to hear the fun;  
 The reefers tumbled out, the men laid aft,  
 The Cook blinked, cleaning a mess-kid in the sun.  
 "What's up with Dauber now?" said everyone.  
 "Someone has spoiled my drawings—look at this!"  
 "Well, that 's a dirty trick, by God, it is!"

"It is," said Sam, "a low-down dirty trick,  
 To spoil a fellow's work in such a way,  
 And if you catch him, Dauber, punch him sick,  
 For he deserves it, be he who he may."  
 A seaman shook his old head wise and grey.  
 "It seems to me," he said, "who ain't no judge,  
 Them drawings look much better now they're smudge."

"Where were they, Dauber? On the deck-house? Where?"  
 "Under the long-boat, in a secret place."  
 "The blackguard must have seen you put them there.  
 He is a swine! I tell him to his face:  
 I didn't think we'd anyone so base."  
 "Nor I," said Dauber. "There was six weeks' time |  
 Just wasted in these drawings: it 's a crime!"

"Well, don't you say we did it," growled his mates,  
 "And as for crime, be damned! the things were smears—  
 Best overboard, like you, with shot for weights;  
 Thank God they're gone, and now go shake your ears."  
 The Dauber listened, very near to tears.  
 "Dauber, if I were you," said Sam again,  
 "I'd aft, and see the Captain and complain."

A sigh came from the assembled seamen there.  
 Would he be such a fool for their delight  
 As go to tell the Captain? Would he dare?  
 And would the thunder roar, the lightning smite?  
 There was the Captain come to take a sight,  
 Handling his sextant by the chart-house aft.  
 The Dauber turned, the seamen thought him daft.



The Captain took his sights—a mate below  
Noted the times; they shouted to each other,  
The Captain quick with “Stop,” the answer slow,  
Repeating slowly one height then another.  
The swooping clipper stumbled through the smother,  
The ladder brasses in the sunlight burned,  
The Dauber waited till the Captain turned.

There stood the Dauber, humbled to the bone,  
Waiting to speak. The Captain let him wait,  
Glanced at the course, and called in even tone,  
“What is the man there wanting, Mr. Mate?”  
The logship clattered on the grating straight,  
The reel rolled to the scuppers with a clatter,  
The Mate came grim: “Well, Dauber, what ’s the matter?”

“Please, sir, they spoiled my drawings.” “Who did?”  
“They.”

“Who ’s they?” “I don’t quite know, sir.”

“Don’t quite know, sir?”

Then why are you aft to talk about it, hey?

Whom d’you complain of?” “No one.” “No one?” “No,  
sir.”

“Well, then, go forward till you’ve found them. Go, sir.  
If you complain of someone, then I’ll see.  
Now get to hell! and don’t come bothering me.”

“But, sir, they washed them off, and some they cut.  
Look here, sir, how they spoiled them.” “Never mind.  
Go shove your head inside the scuttle butt,  
And that will make you cooler. You will find  
Nothing like water when you’re mad and blind.  
Where were the drawings? in your chest, or where?”  
“Under the long-boat, sir; I put them there.”

“Under the long-boat, hey? Now mind your tip.  
I’ll have the skids kept clear with nothing round them;  
The long-boat ain’t a store in this here ship.  
Lucky for you it wasn’t I who found them.  
If I had seen them, Dauber, I’d have drowned them.  
Now you be warned by this. I tell you plain—  
Don’t stow your brass-rags under boats again.

"Go forward to your berth." The Dauber turned.  
The listeners down below them winked and smiled,  
Knowing how red the Dauber's temples burned,  
Having lost the case about his only child.  
His work was done to nothing and defiled,  
And there was no redress: the Captain's voice  
Spoke, and called, "Painter," making him rejoice.

The Captain and the Mate conversed together.  
"Drawings, you tell me, Mister?" "Yes, sir; views  
Wiped off with turps, I gather that 's his blether.  
He says they're things he can't afford to lose.  
He 's Dick, who came to sea in dancing shoes,  
And found the dance a bear dance. They were hidden  
Under the long-boat's chocks, which I've forbidden."

"Wiped off with turps?" The Captain sucked his lip  
"Who did it, Mister?" "Reefers, I suppose;  
Them devils do the most pranks in a ship;  
The round-house might have done it, Cook or Bose."  
"I can't take notice of it till he knows.  
How does he do his work?" "Well, no offence;  
He tries; he does his best. He 's got no sense."

"Painter," the Captain called; the Dauber came.  
"What 's all this talk of drawings? What 's the matter?"  
"They spoiled my drawings, sir." "Well, who 's to blame?  
The long-boat 's there for no one to get at her;  
You broke the rules, and if you choose to scatter  
Gear up and down where it 's no right to be,  
And suffer as result, don't come to me.

"Your place is in the round-house, and your gear  
Belongs where you belong. Who spoiled your things?  
Find out who spoiled your things and fetch him here."  
"But, sir, they cut the canvas into strings."  
"I want no argument nor questionings.  
Go back where you belong and say no more,  
And please remember that you're not on shore."

The Dauber touched his brow and slunk away—  
They eyed his going with a bitter eye.  
“Dauber,” said Sam, “what did the Captain say?”  
The Dauber drooped his head without reply.  
“Go forward, Dauber, and enjoy your cry.”  
The Mate limped to the rail; like little feet  
Over his head the drumming reef-points beat.

The Dauber reached the berth and entered in.  
Much mockery followed after as he went,  
And each face seemed to greet him with the grin  
Of hounds hot following on a creature spent.  
“Aren’t you a fool?” each mocking visage meant.  
“Who did it, Dauber? What did Captain say?  
It is a crime, and there’ll be hell to pay.”

He bowed his head, the house was full of smoke;  
The Sails was pointing shackles on his chest.  
“Lord, Dauber, be a man and take a joke”—  
He puffed his pipe—“and let the matter rest.  
Spit brown, my son, and get a hairy breast;  
Get shoulders on you at the crojick braces,  
And let this painting business go to blazes.

“What good can painting do to anyone?  
I don’t say never do it; far from that—  
No harm in sometimes painting just for fun.  
Keep it for fun, and stick to what you’re at.  
Your job ’s to fill your bones up and get fat;  
Rib up like Barney’s Bull, and thicken your neck.  
Throw paints to hell, boy; you belong on deck.”

“That ’s right,” said Chips; “it ’s downright good advice.  
Painting ’s no good; what good can painting do  
Up on a lower topsail stiff with ice,  
With all your little fish-hooks frozen blue?  
Painting won’t help you at the weather clew,  
Nor pass your gaskets for you, nor make sail.  
Painting ’s a balmy job not worth a nail.”

The Dauber did not answer; time was passing.  
He pulled his easel out, his paints, his stool.  
The wind was dropping, and the sea was glassing—  
New realms of beauty waited for his rule;  
The draught out of the crojick kept him cool.  
He sat to paint, alone and melancholy.  
“No turning fools,” the Chips said, “from their folly.”

He dipped his brush and tried to fix a line,  
And then came peace, and gentle beauty came,  
Turning his spirit's water into wine,  
Lightening his darkness with a touch of flame.  
O, joy of trying for beauty, ever the same,  
You never fail, your comforts never end;  
O, balm of this world's way; O, perfect friend!

## III

THEY lost the Trades soon after; then came calm,  
Light little gusts and rain, which soon increased  
To glorious northers shouting out a psalm  
At seeing the bright blue water silver fleeced;  
Hornwards she rushed, trampling the seas to yeast.  
There fell a rain-squall in a blind day's end  
When for an hour the Dauber found a friend.

Out of the rain the voices called and passed,  
The staysails flogged, the tackle yanked and shook.  
Inside the harness-room a lantern cast  
Light and wild shadows as it ranged its hook.  
The watch on deck was gathered in the nook,  
They had taken shelter in that secret place,  
Wild light gave wild emotions to each face.

One beat the beef-cask, and the others sang  
A song that had brought anchors out of seas  
In ports where bells of Christians never rang,  
Nor any sea mark blazed among the trees.  
By forlorn swamps, in ice, by windy keys,  
That song had sounded; now it shook the air  
From these eight wanderers brought together there.

Under the poop-break, sheltering from the rain,  
 The Dauber sketched some likeness of the room,  
 A note to be a prompting to his brain,  
 A spark to make old memory reillumine.  
 "Dauber," said someone near him in the gloom,  
 "How goes it, Dauber?" It was reefer Si.  
 "There 's not much use in trying to keep dry."

They sat upon the sail-room doorway coaming,  
 The lad held forth like youth, the Dauber listened  
 To how the boy had had a taste for roaming,  
 And what the sea is said to be and isn't.  
 Where the dim lamplight fell the wet deck glistened,  
 Si said the Horn was still some weeks away,  
 "But tell me, Dauber, where d'you hail from? Eh?"

The rain blew past and let the stars appear;  
 The seas grew larger as the moonlight grew  
 For half an hour the ring of heaven was clear,  
 Dusty with moonlight, grey rather than blue;  
 In that great moon the showing stars were few.  
 The sleepy time-boy's feet passed overhead.  
 "I come from out past Gloucester," Dauber said;

"Not far from Pauntley, if you know those parts;  
 The place is Spital Farm, near Silver Hill,  
 Above a trap-hatch where a mill-stream starts.  
 We had a mill once, but we've stopped the mill,  
 My dad and sister keep the farm on still.  
 We're only tenants, but we've rented there,  
 Father and son, for over eighty year.

"Father has worked the farm since grandfer went.  
 It means the world to him; I can't think why  
 They bleed him to the last half-crown for rent,  
 And this and that have almost milked him dry.  
 The land 's all starved; if he'd put money by,  
 And corn was up, and rent was down two-thirds. . . .  
 But then they aren't, so what 's the use of words.

"Yet still he couldn't bear to see it pass  
 To strangers, or to think a time would come  
 When other men than us would mow the grass,  
 And other names than ours have the home.  
 Some sorrows come from evil thought, but some  
 Comes when two men are near, and both are blind  
 To what is generous in the other's mind.

"I was the only boy, and father thought  
 I'd farm the Spital after he was dead,  
 And many a time he took me out and taught  
 About manures and seed-corn white and red,  
 And soils and hops, but I'd an empty head;  
 Harvest or seed, I would not do a turn—  
 I loathed the farm, I didn't want to learn.

"He did not mind at first, he thought it youth  
 Feeling the collar, and that I should change.  
 Then time gave him some inklings of the truth,  
 And that I loathed the farm, and wished to range.  
 Truth to a man of fifty's always strange;  
 It was most strange and terrible to him  
 That I, his heir, should be the devil's limb.

"Yet still he hoped the Lord might change my mind;  
 I'd see him bridle in his wrath and hate,  
 And almost break my heart he was so kind,  
 Biting his lips sore with resolve to wait.  
 And then I'd try awhile; but it was Fate:  
 I didn't want to learn; the farm to me  
 Was mire and hopeless work and misery.

"Though there were things I loved about it, too—  
 The beasts, the apple-trees, and going haying.  
 And then I tried; but no, it wouldn't do,  
 The farm was prison, and my thoughts were straying.  
 And there'd come father, with his grey head, praying,  
 'O, my dear son, don't let the Spital pass;  
 It's my old home, boy, where your grandfer was.

“ ‘And now you won’t learn farming; you don’t care,  
The old home’s nought to you. I’ve tried to teach you;  
I’ve begged Almighty God, boy, all I dare,  
To use His hand if word of mine won’t reach you.  
Boy, for your grandfer’s sake I do beseech you,  
Don’t let the Spital pass to strangers. Squire  
Has said he’d give it you if we require.

“ ‘Your mother used to walk here, boy, with me,  
It was her favourite walk down to the mill;  
And there we’d talk how little death would be,  
Knowing our work was going on here still.  
You’ve got the brains, you only want the will—  
Don’t disappoint your mother and your father.  
I’ll give you time to travel, if you’d rather.’

“ ‘But, no, I’d wander up the brooks to read.  
Then sister Jane would start with nagging tongue,  
Saying my sin made father’s heart to bleed, &  
And how she feared she’d live to see me hung.  
And then she’d read me bits from Dr. Young.  
And when we three would sit to supper, Jane  
Would fillip dad till dad began again.

“ ‘I’ve been here all my life, boy. I was born  
Up in the room above—looks on the mead.  
I never thought you’d cockle my clean corn,  
And leave the old home to a stranger’s seed.  
Father and I have made here ’thout a weed:  
We’ve give our lives to make that. Eighty years.  
And now I go down to the grave in tears.’

“ ‘And then I’d get ashamed and take off coat,  
And work maybe a week, ploughing and sowing,  
And then I’d creep away and sail my boat,  
Or watch the water when the mill was going.  
That’s my delight—to be near water flowing,  
Dabbling or sailing boats or jumping stanks,  
Or finding moorhens’ nests along the banks.

"And one day father found a ship I'd built;  
 He took the cart-whip to me over that,  
 And I, half mad with pain, and sick with guilt,  
 Went up and hid in what we called the flat,  
 A dusty hole given over to the cat.  
 She kittenened there; the kittens had worn paths  
 Among the cobwebs, dust, and broken laths.

"And putting down my hand between the beams  
 I felt a leathery thing, and pulled it clear:  
 A book with white cocoons stuck in the seams,  
 Where spiders had had nests for many a year.  
 It was my mother's sketch-book; hid, I fear,  
 Lest dad should ever see it. Mother's life  
 Was not her own while she was father's wife.

"There were her drawings, dated, pencilled faint.  
 March was the last one, eighteen eighty-three,  
 Unfinished that, for tears had smeared the paint.  
 The rest was landscape, not yet brought to be.  
 That was a holy afternoon to me;  
 That book a sacred book; the flat a place  
 Where I could meet my mother face to face.

"She had found peace of spirit, mother had,  
 Drawing the landscape from the attic there—  
 Heart-broken, often, after rows with dad,  
 Hid like a wild thing in a secret lair.  
 That rotting sketch-book showed me how and where  
 I, too, could get away; and then I knew  
 That drawing was the work I longed to do.

"Drawing became my life. I drew, I toiled,  
 And every penny I could get I spent  
 On paints and artist's matters, which I spoiled  
 Up in the attic to my heart's content,  
 Till one day father asked me what I meant;  
 The time had come, he said, to make an end.  
 Now it must finish: what did I intend?



"Either I took to farming, like his son,  
In which case he would teach me, early and late  
(Provided that my daubing mood was done),  
Or I must go; it must be settled straight.  
If I refused to farm, there was the gate.  
I was to choose, his patience was all gone,  
The present state of things could not go on.

"Sister was there; she eyed me while he spoke.  
The kitchen clock ran down and struck the hour,  
And something told me father's heart was broke,  
For all he stood so set and looked so sour.  
Jane took a duster, and began to scour  
A pewter on the dresser; she was crying.  
I stood stock still a long time, not replying.

"Dad waited, then he snorted and turned round.  
'Well, think of it,' he said. He left the room,  
His boots went clop along the stony ground  
Out to the orchard and the apple-bloom.  
A cloud came past the sun and made a gloom;  
I swallowed with dry lips, then sister turned.  
She was dead white but for her eyes that burned.

"'You're breaking father's heart, Joe,' she began;  
'It's not as if——' she checked, in too much pain.  
'O, Joe, don't help to kill so fine a man;  
You're giving him our mother over again.  
It's wearing him to death, Joe, heart and brain;  
You know what store he sets on leaving this  
To (it's too cruel) to a son of his.

"'Yet you go painting all the day. O Joe,  
Couldn't you make an effort? Can't you see  
What folly it is of yours? It's not as though  
You are a genius, or could ever be.  
O Joe, for father's sake, if not for me,  
Give up this craze for painting, and be wise  
And work with father, where your duty lies.'

“‘It goes too deep,’ I said; ‘I loathe the farm;  
I couldn’t help, even if I’d the mind.  
Even if I helped, I’d only do him harm;  
Father would see it, if he were not blind.  
I was not built to farm, as he would find.  
O Jane, it ’s bitter hard to stand alone  
And spoil my father’s life or spoil my own.’

“‘Spoil both,’ she said, ‘the way you’re shaping now.  
You’re only a boy not knowing your own good.  
Where will you go, suppose you leave here? How  
Do you propose to earn your daily food?  
Draw? Daub the pavements? There ’s a feckless brood  
Goes to the devil daily, Joe, in cities  
Only from thinking how divine their wit is.

“‘Clouds are they, without water, carried away.  
And you’ll be one of them, the way you’re going,  
Daubing at silly pictures all the day,  
And praised by silly fools who’re always blowing.  
And you chose this when you might go a-sowing,  
Casting the good corn into chosen mould  
That shall in time bring forth a hundredfold.’

“‘So we went on, but in the end it ended.  
I felt I’d done a murder; I felt sick.  
There ’s much in human minds cannot be mended,  
And that, not I, played dad a cruel trick.  
There was one mercy: that it ended quick.  
I went to join my mother’s brother: he  
Lived down the Severn. He was kind to me.

“‘And there I learned house-painting for a living.  
I’d have been happy there, but that I knew  
I’d sinned before my father past forgiving,  
And that they sat at home, that silent two,  
Wearing the fire out and the evening through,  
Silent, defeated, broken, in despair,  
My plate unset, my name gone, and my chair.

"I saw all that; and sister Jane came white—  
White as a ghost, with fiery, weeping eyes.  
I saw her all day long and half the night,  
Bitter as gall, and passionate and wise.  
'Joe, you have killed your father: there he lies.  
You have done your work—you with our mother's ways.'  
She said it plain, and then her eyes would blaze.

"And then one day I had a job to do  
Down below bridge, by where the docks begin,  
And there I saw a clipper towing through,  
Up from the sea that morning, entering in.  
Raked to the nines she was, lofty and thin,  
Her ensign ruffling red, her bunts in pile,  
Beauty and strength together, wonder, style.

"She docked close to the gates, and there she lay  
Over the water from me, well in sight;  
And as I worked I watched her all the day,  
Finding her beauty ever fresh delight.  
Her house-flag was bright green with strips of white,  
High in the sunny air it rose to shake  
Above the skysail poles most splendid rake.

"And when I felt unhappy I would look  
Over the river at her, and her pride,  
So calm, so quiet, came as a rebuke  
To half the passionate pathways which I tried;  
And though the autumn ran its term and died,  
And winter fell and cold December came,  
She was still splendid there, and still the same.

"Then on a day she sailed; but when she went  
My mind was clear on what I had to try:  
To see the sea and ships, and what they meant,  
That was the thing I longed to do; so I  
Drew and worked hard, and studied and put by,  
And thought of nothing else but that one end,  
But let all else go hang—love, money, friend.

"And now I've shipped as Dauber I've begun.  
It was hard work to find a dauber's berth;  
I hadn't any friends to find me one,  
Only my skill, for what it may be worth;  
But I'm at sea now, going about the earth,  
And when the ship 's paid off, when we return,  
I'll join some Paris studio and learn."

He stopped, the air came moist, Si did not speak;  
The Dauber turned his eyes to where he sat,  
Pressing the sail-room hinges with his cheek,  
His face half covered with a drooping hat.  
Huge dewdrops from the staysails dropped and spat,  
Si did not stir, the Dauber touched his sleeve,  
A little birdlike noise came from a sheave.

Si was asleep, sleeping a calm deep sleep,  
Still as a warden of the Egyptian dead  
In some old haunted temple buried deep  
Under the desert sand, sterile and red.  
The Dauber shook his arm; Si jumped and said,  
"Good yarn, I swear! I say, you have a brain—  
Was that eight bells that went?" He slept again.

Then waking up, "I've had a nap," he cried.  
"Was that one bell? What, Dauber, you still here?"  
"Si there?" the Mate's voice called. "Sir," he replied.  
The order made the lad's thick vision clear;  
A something in the Mate's voice made him fear  
"Si," said the Mate, "I hear you've made a friend—  
Dauber, in short. That friendship 's got to end.

"You're a young gentleman. Your place aboard  
Is with the gentlemen abaft the mast.  
You're learning to command; you can't afford  
To yarn with any man. But there . . . it 's past.  
You've done it once; let this time be the last.  
The Dauber's place is forward. Do it again,  
I'll put you bunking forward with the men.

"Dismiss." Si went, but Sam, beside the Mate,  
Timekeeper there, walked with him to the rail  
And whispered him the menace of "You wait"—  
Words which have turned full many a reefer pale.  
The watch was changed; the watch on deck trimmed sail.  
Sam, going below, called all the reefers down,  
Sat in his bunk and eyed them with a frown.

"Si here," he said, "has soiled the half-deck's name  
Talking to Dauber—Dauber, the ship's clout.  
A reefer takes the Dauber for a flame,  
The half-deck take the round-house walking out.  
He 's soiled the half-deck's honour; now, no doubt,  
The Bosun and his mates will come here sneaking,  
Asking for smokes, or blocking gangways speaking.

"I'm not a vain man, given to blow or boast;  
I'm not a proud man, but I truly feel  
That while I've bossed this mess and ruled this roast  
I've kept this hooker's half-deck damned genteel.  
Si must ask pardon, or be made to squeal.  
Down on your knees, dog; them we love we chasten.  
Jao, pasea, my son—in English, Hasten."

Si begged for pardon, meekly kneeling down  
Before the reefer's mess assembled grim.  
The lamp above them smoked the glass all brown;  
Beyond the door the dripping sails were dim.  
The Dauber passed the door; none spoke to him.  
He sought his berth and slept, or, waking, heard  
Rain on the deck-house—rain, no other word.

## IV

Our of the air a time of quiet came.  
Calm fell upon the heaven like a drowth;  
The brass sky watched the brassy water flame,  
Drowsed as a snail the clipper loitered south  
Slowly, with no white bone across her mouth,  
No rushing glory, like a queen made bold,  
The Dauber strove to draw her as she rolled.

There the four leaning spires of canvas rose,  
 Royals and skysails lifting, gently lifting,  
 White like the brightness that a great fish blows  
 When billows are at peace and ships are drifting;  
 With mighty jerks that set the shadows shifting,  
 The courses tugged their tethers: a blue haze  
 Drifted like ghosts of flocks come down to graze,

There the great skyline made her perfect round,  
 Notched now and then by the sea's deeper blue;  
 A smoke-smutch marked a steamer homeward bound,  
 The haze wrought all things to intenser hue.  
 In tingling impotence the Dauber drew  
 As all men draw, keen to the shaken soul  
 To give a hint that might suggest the whole.

A naked seaman washing a red shirt  
 Sat at a tub whistling between his teeth;  
 Complaining blocks quavered like something hurt,  
 A sailor cut an old boot for a sheath,  
 The ship bowed to her shadow-ship beneath,  
 And little slaps of spray came at the roll  
 On to the deck-planks from the scupper-hole.

He watched it, painting patiently, as paints  
 With eyes that pierce behind the blue sky's veil,  
 The Benedictine in a Book of Saints  
 Watching the passing of the Holy Grail;  
 The green dish dripping blood, the trump, the hail,  
 The spears that pass, the memory, and the passion,  
 The beauty moving under this world's fashion.

But as he painted, slowly, man by man,  
 The seamen gathered near; the Bosun stood  
 Behind him, jeering; then the Sails began  
 Sniggering with comment that it was not good.  
 Chips flicked his sketch with little scraps of wood,  
 Saying, "That hit the top-knot," every time.  
 Cook mocked, "My lovely drawings; it's a crime."

Slowly the men came nearer, till a crowd  
 Stood at his elbow, muttering as he drew;  
 The Bosun, turning to them, spoke aloud,  
 "This is the ship that never got there. You  
 Look at her here, what Dauber's trying to do.  
 Look at her! lummy, like a Christmas-tree.  
 That thing 's a ship; he calls this painting. See?"

Seeing the crowd, the Mate came forward; then  
 "Sir," said the Bosun, "come and see the sight!  
 Here 's Dauber makes a circus for the men.  
 He calls this thing a ship—this hell's delight!"  
 "Man," said the Mate, "you'll never get her right  
 Daubing like that. Look her!" He took a brush.  
 "Now, Dauber, watch; I'll put you to the blush.

"Look here. Look there. Now watch this ship of mine  
 He drew her swiftly from a memory stored.  
 "God, sir," the Bosun said, "you do her fine!"  
 "Ay," said the Mate, "I do so, by the Lord!  
 I'll paint a ship with any man aboard."  
 They hung about his sketch like beasts at bait.  
 "There now, I taught him painting," said the Mate.

When he had gone, the gathered men dispersed;  
 Yet two or three still lingered to dispute  
 What errors made the Dauber's work the worst.  
 They probed his want of knowledge to the root.  
 "Bei Gott!" they swore, "der Dauber cannot do 't;  
 He haf no knolich how to put der pense.  
 Der Mate's is goot. Der Dauber haf no sense."

"You hear?" the Bosun cried, "you cannot do it!"  
 "A gospel truth," the Cook said, "true as hell!  
 And wisdom, Dauber, if you only knew it;  
 A five year boy would do a ship as well."  
 "If that's the kind of thing you hope to sell,  
 God help you," echoed Chips. "I tell you true  
 The job's beyond you, Dauber; drop it, do.

"Drop it, in God's name drop it, and have done!  
You see you cannot do it. Here 's the Mate  
Paints you to frazzles before everyone;  
Paints you a dandy clipper while you wait.  
While you, Lord love us, daub. I tell you straight,  
We've had enough of daubing; drop it; quit.  
You cannot paint, so make an end of it."

"That's sense," said all; "you cannot, why pretend?"  
The Dauber rose and put his easel by.  
"You've said enough," he said, "now let it end.  
Who cares how bad my painting may be? I  
Mean to go on, and, if I fail, to try.  
However much I miss of my intent,  
If I have done my best I'll be content.

"You cannot understand that. Let it be.  
You cannot understand, nor know, nor share.  
This is a matter touching only me;  
My sketch may be a daub, for aught I care.  
You may be right. But even if you were,  
Your mocking should not stop this work of mine;  
Not though it be, its prompting is divine.

"You cannot understand that—you, and you,  
And you, you Bosun. You can stand and jeer,  
That is the task your spirit fits you to,  
That you can understand and hold most dear.  
Grin, then, like collars, ear to donkey ear,  
But let me daub. Try, you, to understand  
Which task will bear the light best on God's hand."

## V

THE wester came as steady as the Trades;  
Brightly it blew, and still the ship did shoulder  
The brilliance of the water's white cockades  
Into the milky green of smoky smoulder.  
The sky grew bluer and the air, grew colder.  
Southward she thundered while the westers held,  
Proud, with taut bridles, pawing, but compelled.



And still the Dauber strove, though all men mocked,  
To draw the splendour of the passing thing,  
And deep inside his heart a something locked.  
Long pricking in him, now began to sting—  
A fear of the disasters storm might bring;  
His rank as painter would be ended then—  
He would keep watch and watch like other men.

And go aloft with them to man the yard  
When the great ship was rolling scuppers under,  
Burying her snout all round the compass card,  
While the green water struck at her and stunned her;  
When the lee-rigging slacked, when one long thunder  
Boomed from the black to windward, when the sail  
Booted and spurred the devil in the gale.

For him to ride on men: that was the time  
The Dauber dreaded; then the test would come,  
When seas, half-frozen, slushed the decks with slime,  
And all the air was blind with flying scum;  
When the drenched sails were furled, when the fierce hum  
In weather riggings died into the roar  
Of God's eternal never tamed by shore.

Once in the passage he had worked aloft,  
Shifting her suits one summer afternoon,  
In the bright Trade wind, when the wind was soft,  
Shaking the points, making the tackle croon.  
But that was child's play to the future: soon  
He would be ordered up when sails and spars  
Were flying and going mad among the stars.

He had been scared that first time, daunted, thrilled,  
Not by the height so much as by the size,  
And then the danger to the man unskilled  
In standing on a rope that runs through eyes.  
"But in a storm," he thought, "the yards will rise  
And roll together down, and snap their gear!"  
The sweat came cold upon his palms for fear.

Sometimes in Gloucester he had felt a pang  
Swinging below the house-eaves on a stage.  
But stages carry rails; here he would hang  
Upon a jerking rope in a storm's rage,  
Ducked that the sheltering oilskin might assuage  
The beating of the storm, clutching the jack,  
Beating the sail, and being beaten back.

Drenched, frozen, gasping, blinded, beaten dumb,  
High in the night, reeling great blinding arcs  
As the ship rolled, his chappy fingers numb,  
The deck below a narrow blur of marks,  
The sea a welter of whiteness shot with sparks,  
Now snapping up in bursts, now dying away,  
Salting the horizontal snow with spray.

A hundred and fifty feet above the deck,  
And there, while the ship rolls, boldly to sit  
Upon a foot-rope moving, jerk and check,  
While half a dozen seamen work on it;  
Held by one hand, straining, by strength and wit  
To toss a gasket's coil around the yard,  
How could he compass that when blowing hard?

And if he failed in any least degree,  
Or faltered for an instant, or showed slack,  
He might go drown himself within the sea,  
And add a bubble to the clipper's track.  
He had signed his name, there was no turning back,  
No pardon for default—this must be done.  
One iron rule at sea binds everyone.

Till now he had been treated with contempt  
As neither man nor thing, a creature borne  
On the ship's articles, but left exempt  
From all the seamen's life except their scorn.  
But he would rank as seaman off the Horn,  
Work as a seaman, and be kept or cast  
By standards set for men before the mast.

Even now they shifted suits of sails; they bent  
The storm-suit ready for the expected time;  
The mighty wester that the Plate had lent  
Had brought them far into the wintry clime.  
At dawn, out of the shadow, there was rime,  
The dim Magellan Clouds were frosty clear,  
The wind had edge, the testing-time was near.

And then he wondered if the tales were lies  
Told by old hands to terrify the new,  
For, since the ship left England, only twice  
Had there been need to start a sheet or clew,  
Then only royals, for an hour or two,  
And no seas broke aboard, nor was it cold.  
What were these gales of which the stories told?

The thought went by. He had heard the Bosun tell  
Too often, and too fiercely, not to know  
That being off the Horn in June is hell:  
Hell of continual toil in ice and snow,  
Frost-bitten hell in which the westers blow  
Shrieking for days on end, in which the seas  
Gulf the starved seamen till their marrows freeze.

Such was the weather he might look to find,  
Such was the work expected: there remained  
Firmly to set his teeth, resolve his mind,  
And be the first, however much it pained,  
And bring his honour round the Horn unstained,  
And win his mates' respect; and thence, untainted,  
Be ranked as man however much he painted.

He drew deep breath; a gantline swayed aloft  
A lower topsail, hard with rope and leather  
Such as men's frozen fingers fight with oft  
Below the Ramirez in Cape Horn weather.  
The arms upon the yard hove all together,  
Lighting the head along; a thought occurred  
Within the painter's brain like a bright bird:

That this, and so much like it, of man's toil,  
Compass'd by naked manhood in strange places,  
Was all heroic, but outside the coil  
Within which modern art gleams or grimaces;  
That if he drew that line of sailors' faces  
Sweating the sail, their passionate play and change,  
It would be new, and wonderful, and strange.

That that was what his work meant; it would be  
A training in new vision—a revealing  
Of passionate men in battle with the sea,  
High on an unseen stage, shaking and reeling;  
And men through him would understand their feeling,  
Their might, their misery, their tragic power,  
And all by suffering pain a little hour;

High on the yard with them, feeling their pain,  
Battling with them; and it had not been done.  
He was a door to new worlds in the brain,  
A window opening letting in the sun,  
A voice saying, "Thus is bread fetched and ports won  
And life lived out at sea where men exist  
Solely by man's strong brain and sturdy wrist."

So he decided, as he cleaned his brasses,  
Hearing without, aloft, the curse, the shout  
Where the taut gantline passes and repasses,  
Heaving new topsails to be lighted out.  
It was most proud, however self might doubt,  
To share man's tragic toil and paint it true.  
He took the offered Fate: this he would do.

That night the snow fell between six and seven.  
A little feathery fall so light, so dry—  
An aimless dust out of a confused heaven,  
Upon an air no steadier than a sigh;  
The powder dusted down and wandered by  
So purposeless, so many, and so cold,  
Then died, and the wind ceased and the ship rolled.

Rolled till she clanged—rolled till the brain was tired,  
Marking the acme of the heaves, the pause  
While the sea-beauty rested and respired,  
Drinking great draughts of roller at her hawse.  
Flutters of snow came aimless upon flaws.  
“Lock up your paints,” the Mate said, speaking light:  
“This is the Horn; you’ll join my watch to-night!”

## VI

ALL through the windless night the clipper rolled  
In a great swell with oily gradual heaves  
Which rolled her down until her time-bells tolled,  
Clang, and the weltering water moaned like beeves.  
The thundering rattle of slatting shook the sheaves,  
Startles of water made the swing ports gush,  
The sea was moaning and sighing and saying “Hush!”

It was all black and starless. Peering down  
Into the water, trying to pierce the gloom,  
One saw a dim, smooth, oily glitter of brown  
Heaving and dying away and leaving room  
For yet another. Like the march of doom  
Came those great powers of marching silences;  
Then fog came down, dead-cold, and hid the seas.

They set the Dauber to the foghorn. There  
He stood upon the poop, making to sound  
Out of the pump the sailors’ nasal blare,  
Listening lest ice should make the note resound.  
She bayed there like a solitary hound  
Lost in a covert; all the watch she bayed,  
The fog, come closelier down, no answer made.

Denser it grew, until the ship was lost.  
The elemental hid her; she was merged  
In mufflings of dark death, like a man’s ghost,  
New to the change of death, yet thither urged.  
Then from the hidden waters something surged—  
Mournful, despairing, great, greater than speech,  
A noise like one slow wave on a still beach.

Mournful, and then again mournful, and still  
Out of the night that mighty voice arose;  
The Dauber at his foghorn felt the thrill.  
Who rode that desolate sea? What forms were those?  
Mournful, from things defeated, in the throes  
Of memory of some conquered hunting-ground,  
Out of the night of death arose the sound.

"Whales!" said the mate. They stayed there all night long  
Answering the horn. Out of the night they spoke,  
Defeated creatures who had suffered wrong,  
But were still noble underneath the stroke.  
They filled the darkness when the Dauber woke;  
The men came peering to the rail to hear,  
And the sea sighed, and the fog rose up sheer.

A wall of nothing at the world's last edge,  
Where no life came except defeated life.  
The Dauber felt shut in within a hedge,  
Behind which form was hidden and thought was rife,  
And that a blinding flash, a thrust, a knife  
Would sweep the hedge away and make all plain,  
Brilliant beyond all words, blinding the brain.

So the night past, but then no morning broke—  
Only a something showed that night was dead.  
A sea-bird, cackling like a devil, spoke,  
And the fog drew away and hung like lead.  
Like mighty cliffs it shaped, sullen and red;  
Like glowering gods at watch it did appear,  
And sometimes drew away, and then drew near.

Like islands, and like chasms, and like hell,  
But always mighty and red, gloomy and ruddy,  
Shutting the visible sea in like a well;  
Slow heaving in vast ripples, blank and muddy,  
Where the sun should have risen it streaked bloody.  
The day was still-born; all the sea-fowl scattering  
Splashed the still-water, mewing, hovering, clattering.

Then Polarit snowame down little and light,  
Till all the sky was hidden by the small,  
Most multitudinous drift of dirty white  
Tumbling and wavering down and covering all—  
Covering the sky, the sea, the clipper tall,  
Furring the ropes with white, casing the mast,  
Coming on no known air, but blowing past.

And all the air seemed full of gradual moan,  
As though in those cloud-chasms the horns were blowing  
The mort for gods cast out and overthrown,  
Or for the eyeless sun plucked out and going.  
Slow the low gradual moan came in the snowing;  
The Dauber felt the prelude had begun.  
The snowstorm fluttered by; he saw the sun

Show and pass by, gleam from one towering prison  
Into another, vaster and more grim,  
Which in dull crags of darkness had arisen  
To muffle-to a final door on him.  
The gods upon the dull crags lowered dim,  
The pigeons chattered, quarrelling in the track.  
In the south-west the dimness dulled to black.

Then came the cry of "Call all hands on deck!"  
The Dauber knew its meaning; it was come:  
Cape Horn, that tramples beauty into wreck,  
And crumples steel and smites the strong man dumb.  
Down clattered flying kites and staysails: some  
Sang out in quick, high calls; the fairleads skirled,  
And from the south-west came the end of the world.

"Caught in her ball-dress," said the Bosun, hauling;  
"Lee-ay, lee-ay!" quick, high, came the men's call;  
It was all wallop of sails and startled calling.  
"Let fly!" "Let go!" "Clew up!" and "Let go all!"  
"Now up and make them fast!" "Here, give us a haul!"  
"Now up and stow them! Quick! By God! we're done!"  
The blackness crunched all memory of the sun.

"Up!" said the Mate. "Mizen topgallants. Hurry!"  
The Dauber ran, the others ran, the sails  
Slatted and shook; out of the black a flurry  
Whirled in fine lines, tattering the edge to trails.  
Painting and art and England were old tales  
Told in some other life to that pale man,  
Who struggled with white fear and gulped and ran.

He struck a ringbolt in his haste and fell—  
Rose, sick with pain, half-lamed in his left knee;  
He reached the shrouds where clambering men pell-mell  
Hustled each other up and cursed him; he  
Hurried aloft with them; then from the sea  
Came a cold, sudden breath that made the hair  
Stiff on the neck, as though Death whispered there.

A man below him punched him in the side.  
"Get up, you Dauber, or let me get past."  
He saw the belly of the skysail skied,  
Gulped, and clutched tight, and tried to go more fast.  
Sometimes he missed his ratline and was grassed,  
Scraped his shin raw against the rigid line.  
The clamberers reached the futtock-shrouds' incline.

Cursing they came; one kicking out behind,  
Kicked Dauber in the mouth, and one below  
Punched at his calves; the futtock-shrouds inclined,  
It was a perilous path for one to go.  
"Up, Dauber, up!" A curse followed a blow.  
He reached the top and gasped, then on, then on.  
And one voice yelled "Let go!" and one "All gone!"

Fierce clamberers, some in oilskins, some in rags,  
Hustling and hurrying up, up the steep stairs.  
Before the windless sails were blown to flags,  
And whirled like dirty birds athwart great airs,  
Ten men in all, to get this mast of theirs  
Snugged to the gale in time. "Up! Damn you, run!"  
The mizen topmast head was safely won.



"Lay out!" the Bosun yelled. The Dauber laid  
 Out on the yard, gripping the yard, and feeling  
 Sick at the mighty space of air displayed  
 Below his feet, where mewing birds were wheeling.  
 A giddy fear was on him; he was reeling.  
 He bit his lip half through, clutching the jack.  
 A cold sweat glued the shirt upon his back.

The yard was shaking, for a brace was loose.  
 He felt that he would fall; he clutched, he bent,  
 Clammy with natural terror to the shoes  
 While idiotic promptings came and went.  
 Snow fluttered on a wind-flaw and was spent;  
 He saw the water darken. Someone yelled,  
 "Frap it; don't stay to furl! Hold on!" He held.

Darkness came down—half darkness—in a whirl;  
 The sky went out, the waters disappeared.  
 He felt a shocking pressure of blowing hurl  
 The ship upon her side. The darkness speared  
 At her with wind; she staggered, she careered,  
 Then down she lay. The Dauber felt her go;  
 He saw his yard tilt downwards. Then the snow

Whirled all about—dense, multitudinous, cold—  
 Mixed with the wind's one devilish thrust and shriek,  
 Which whiffled out men's tears, deafened, took hold,  
 Flattening the flying drift against the cheek.  
 The yards buckled and bent, man could not speak.  
 The ship lay on her broadside; the wind's sound  
 Had devilish malice at having got her downed.

\* \* \* \* \*

How long the gale had blown he could not tell,  
 Only the world had changed, his life had died.  
 A moment now was everlasting hell.  
 Nature an onslaught from the weather side,  
 A withering rush of death, a frost that cried,  
 Shrieked, till he withered at the heart; a hail  
 Plastered his oilskins with an icy mail.

"Cut!" yelled his mate. He looked—the sail was shred  
Blown into rags in the first furious squall;  
The tatters into tongues and stringers spread  
A block upon the yard thumped like a mall.  
The ship lay—the sea smote her, the wind's bawl  
Came, "loo, loo, loo!" The devil cried his hounds  
On to the poor spent stag strayed in his bounds.

"Cut! Ease her!" yelled his mate; the Dauber heard.  
His mate wormed up the tilted yard and slashed,  
A rag of canvas skimmed like a darting bird.  
The snow whirled, the ship bowed to it, the gear lashed,  
The sea-tops were cut off and flung down smashed;  
Tatters of shouts were flung, the rags of yells—  
And clang, clang, clang, below beat the two bells.

"O God!" the Dauber moaned. A roaring rang,  
Blasting the royals like a cannonade;  
The backstays parted with a cracking clang,  
The upper spars were snapped like twigs decayed—  
Snapped at their heels, their jagged splinters splayed,  
Like white and ghastly hair erect with fear.  
The Mate yelled, "Gone, by God, and pitched them clear!"

"Up!" yelled the Bosun; "up and clear the wreck!"  
The Dauber followed where he led: below  
He caught one giddy glimpsing of the deck  
Filled with white water, as though heaped with snow.  
He saw the streamers of the rigging blow  
Straight out like pennons from the splintered mast,  
Then, all sense dimmed, all was an icy blast.

Roaring from nether hell and filled with ice,  
Roaring and crashing on the jerking stage,  
An utter bridle given to utter vice,  
Limitless power mad with endless rage  
Withering the soul; a minute seemed an age.  
He clutched and hacked at ropes, at rags of sail,  
Thinking that comfort was a fairy-tale

Told long ago—long, long ago—long since  
Heard of in other lives—imagined, dreamed—  
There where the basest beggar was a prince  
To him in torment where the tempest screamed,  
Comfort and warmth and ease no longer seemed  
Things that a man could know: soul, body, brain,  
Knew nothing but the wind, the cold, the pain.

“Leave that!” the Bosun shouted: “Crojick savcl”  
The splitting crojick, not yet gone to rags,  
Thundered below, beating till something gave,  
Bellying between its buntlines into bags.  
Some birds were blown past, shrieking: dark, like shags,  
Their backs seemed, looking down. “Leu, leul” they cried.  
The ship lay, the seas thumped her; she had died.

They reached the crojick yard, which buckled, buckled  
Like a thin whalebone to the topsail’s strain.  
They laid upon the yard and heaved and knuckled,  
Pounding the sail, which jangled and leapt again.  
It was quite hard with ice, its rope like chain,  
Its strength like seven devils; it shook the mast.  
They cursed and toiled and froze: a long time passed

Two hours passed, then a dim lightening came.  
Those frozen ones upon the yard could see  
The mainsail and the foresail still the same,  
Still battling with the hands and blowing free,  
Rags tattered where the staysails used to be.  
The lower topsails stood; the ship’s lee deck  
Seethed with four feet of water filled with wreck.

An hour more went by; the Dauber lost  
All sense of hands and feet, all sense of all  
But of a wind that cut him to the ghost,  
And of a frozen fold he had to haul,  
Of heavens that fell and never ceased to fall,  
And ran in smoky snatches along the sea,  
Leaping from crest to wave-crest, yelling. • He

Lost sense of time; no bells went, but he felt  
 Ages go over him. At last, at last  
 They frapped the cringled crojick's icy pelt;  
 In frozen bulge and bunt they made it fast.  
 Then, scarcely live, they laid in to the mast.  
 The Captain's speaking-trumpet gave a blare,  
 "Make fast the topsail, Mister, while you're there."

Some seamen cursed, but up they had to go—  
 Up to the topsail yard to spend an hour  
 Stowing a topsail in a blinding snow,  
 Which made the strongest man among them cower.  
 More men came up, the fresh hands gave them power,  
 They stowed the sail; then with a rattle of chain  
 One half the crojick burst its bonds again.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

They stowed the sail, frapping it round with rope,  
 Leaving no surface for the wind, no fold,  
 Then down the weather-shrouds, half dead, they grope;  
 That struggle with the sail had made them old.  
 They wondered if the crojick furl would hold.  
 "Lucky," said one, "it didn't spring the spar."  
 "Lucky," the Bosun said, "lucky! We are!

She came within two shakes of turning top  
 Or stripping all her shroud-screws, that first quiff.  
 Now fish those wash-deck buckets out of the slop.  
 Here 's Dauber says he doesn't like Cape Stiff.  
 This isn't wind, man, this is only a whiff.  
 Hold on, all hands, hold on!" a sea, half seen,  
 Paused, mounted, burst, and filled the main-deck green.

The Dauber felt a mountain of water fall.  
 It covered him deep, deep, he felt it fill,  
 Over his head, the deck, the fife-rails, all,  
 Quieting the ship, she trembled and lay still.  
 Then with a rush and shatter and clanging shrill  
 Over she went; he saw the water cream  
 Over the bits; he saw the half-deck stream.

Then in the rush he swirled, over she went;  
Her lee-rail dipped, he struck, and something gave;  
His legs went through a port as the roll spent;  
She paused, then rolled, and back the water drave.  
He drifted with it as a part of the wave,  
Drowning, half-stunned, exhausted, partly frozen,  
He struck the booby hatchway; then the Bosun

Leaped, seeing his chance, before the next sea burst,  
And caught him as he drifted, seized him, held,  
Up-ended him against the bits, and cursed.  
"This ain't the George's Swimming Baths," he yelled;  
"Keep on your feet!" Another grey-back felled  
The two together, and the Bose, half-blind,  
Spat: "One 's a joke," he cursed, "but two 's unkind."

"Now, damn it, Dauber!" said the Mate. "Look out,  
Or you'll be over the side!" The water freed;  
Each clanging freeing-port became a spout.  
The men cleared up the decks as there was need.  
The Dauber's head was cut, he felt it bleed  
Into his oilskins as he clutched and coiled.  
Water and sky were devils' brews which boiled,

Boiled, shrieked, and glowered; but the ship was saved,  
Snugged safely down, though fourteen sails were split.  
Out of the dark a fiercer fury raved.  
The grey-backs died and mounted, each crest lit  
With a white toppling gleam that hissed from it  
And slid, or leaped, or ran with whirls of cloud,  
Mad with inhuman life that shrieked aloud.

The watch was called; Dauber might go below.  
"Splice the main brace!" the Mate called: All laid aft  
To get a gulp of momentary glow  
As some reward for having saved the craft.  
The steward ladled mugs, from which each quaffed  
Whisky, with water, sugar, and lime-juice, hot,  
A quarter of a pint each made the tot. .

Beside the lamp-room door the steward stood  
Ladling it out, and each man came in turn,  
Tipped his sou'-wester, drank it, grunted "Good!"  
And shambled forward, letting it slowly burn.  
When all were gone the Dauber lagged astern,  
Torn by his frozen body's lust for heat,  
The liquor's pleasant smell, so warm, so sweet,

And by a promise long since made at home  
Never to taste strong liquor. Now he knew  
The worth of liquor; now he wanted some.  
His frozen body urged him to the brew;  
Yet it seemed wrong, an evil thing to do  
To break that promise. "Dauber," said the Mate,  
"Drink, and turn in, man; why the hell d'ye wait?"

"Please, sir, I'm temperance." "Temperance are you, hey?  
That 's all the more for me! So you're for slops?  
I thought you'd had enough slops for to-day.  
Go to your bunk and ease her when she drops.  
And—damme, steward! you brew with too much hops!  
Stir up the sugar, man!—and tell your girl  
How kind the Mate was teaching you to furl."

Then the Mate drank the remnants, six men's share,  
And ramped into his cabin, where he stripped  
And danced unclad, and was uproarious there.  
In waltzes with the cabin cat he tripped,  
Singing in tenor clear that he was pipped—  
That "he who strove the tempest to disarm,  
Must never first embrail the lee yard-arm,"

And that his name was Ginger. Dauber crept  
Back to the round-house, gripping by the rail.  
The wind howled by; the passionate water leapt;  
The night was all one roaring with the gale.  
Then at the door he stopped, uttering a wail;  
His hands were perished numb and blue as veins.  
He could not turn the knob for both the Spains.

A hand came shuffling aft, dodging the seas,  
Singing "her nut-brown hair" between his teeth;  
Taking the ocean's tumult at his ease  
Even when the wash about his thighs did seethe.  
His soul was happy in its happy sheath;  
"What, Dauber, won't it open? Fingers cold?  
You'll talk of this time, Dauber, when you're old."

He flung the door half open, and a sea  
Washed them both in, over the splashboard, down  
"You silly, salt miscarriagel" sputtered he.  
"Dauber, pull out the plug before we drown!  
That's spoiled my laces and my velvet gown.  
Where is the plug?" Groping in pitch dark water,  
He sang between his teeth "The Farmer's Daughter."

It was pitch dark within there; at each roll  
The chests slid to the slant; the water rushed,  
Making full many a clanging tin pan bowl  
Into the black below-bunks as it gushed.  
The dog-tired men slept through it; they were hushed.  
The water drained, and then with matches damp  
The man struck heads off till he lit the lamp.

"Thank you," the Dauber said; the seaman grinned.  
"This is your first foul weather?" "Yes." "I thought  
Up on the yard you hadn't seen much wind.  
Them's rotten sea-boots, Dauber, that you brought.  
Now I must cut on deck before I'm caught."  
He went; the lamp-flame smoked; he slammed the door;  
A film of water loitered across the floor.

The Dauber watched it come and watched it go;  
He had had revelation of the lies  
Cloaking the truth men never choose to know;  
He could bear witness now and cleanse their eyes.  
He had beheld in suffering; he was wise;  
This was the sea, this searcher of the soul—  
This never-dying shriek fresh from the Pole.

He shook with cold; his hands could not undo  
His oilskin buttons, so he shook and sat,  
Watching his dirty fingers, dirty blue,  
Hearing without the hammering tackle slat,  
Within, the drops from dripping clothes went pat,  
Running in little patters, gentle, sweet,  
And "Ai, ail" went the wind, and the seas beat.

His bunk was sopping wet; he clambered in.  
None of his clothes were dry; his fear recurred.  
Cramps bunched the muscles underneath his skin.  
The great ship rolled until the lamp was blurred.  
He took his Bible and tried to read a word;  
Trembled at going aloft again, and then  
Resolved to fight it out and show it to men.

Faces recurred, fierce memories of the yard,  
The frozen sail, the savage eyes, the jests,  
The oaths of one great seaman syphilis-scarred,  
The tug of leeches jammed beneath their chests,  
The buntlines bellying bunts out into breasts.  
The deck so desolate-grey, the sky so wild,  
He fell asleep, and slept like a young child.

But not for long; the cold awoke him soon,  
The hot-ache and the skin-cracks and the cramp,  
The seas thundering without, the gale's wild tune,  
The sopping misery of the blankets damp.  
A speaking-trumpet roared; a sea-boot's stamp  
Clogged at the door. A man entered to shout:  
"All hands on deck! Arouse here! Tumble out!"

The caller raised the lamp; his oilskins clicked  
As the thin ice upon them cracked and fell.  
"Rouse out!" he said. "This lamp is frozen wicked.  
Rouse out!" His accent deepened to a yell.  
"We're among ice; it's blowing up like hell.  
We're going to hand both topsails. Time, I guess,  
We're sheeted up. Rouse out! Don't stay to dress!"



"Is it cold on deck?" said Dauber. "Is it cold?  
We're sheeted up, I tell you, inches thick!  
The fo'c's'le 's like a wedding-cake, I'm told.  
Now tumble out, my sons; on deck here, quick!  
Rouse out, away, and come and climb the stick.  
I'm going to call the half-deck. Bosun! Hey!  
Both topsails coming in. Heave out! Away!"

He went; the Dauber tumbled from his bunk,  
Clutching the side. He heard the wind go past,  
Making the great ship wallow as if drunk.  
There was a shocking tumult up the mast.  
"This is the end," he muttered, "come at last!  
I've got to go aloft, facing this cold.  
I can't. I can't. I'll never keep my hold."

"I cannot face the topsail yard again.  
I never guessed what misery it would be."  
The cramps and hot-ache made him sick with pain.  
The ship stopped suddenly from a devilish sea,  
Then, with a triumph of wash, a rush of glee,  
The door burst in, and in the water rolled,  
Filling the lower bunks, black, creaming, cold.

The lamp sucked out. "Wash!" went the water back,  
Then in again, flooding; the Bosun swore.  
"You useless thing! You Dauber! You lee slack!  
Get out, you heekapootal! Shut the door!  
You coo-ilyaira, what are you waiting for?  
Out of my way, you thing—you useless thing!"  
He slammed the door indignant, clanging the ring.

And then he lit the lamp, drowned to the waist;  
"Here 's a fine house! Get at the scupper-holes"—  
He bent against it as the water raced—  
"And pull them out to leeward when she rolls.  
They say some kinds of landmen don't have souls.  
I well believe. A Port Mahon baboon  
Would make more soul than you got with a spoon."

Down in the icy water Dauber groped  
To find the plug; the racing water sluiced  
Over his head and shoulders as she sloped.  
Without, judged by the sound, all hell was loosed.  
He felt cold Death about him tightly noosed.  
That Death was better than the misery there  
Iced on the quaking foothold high in air.

And then the thought came: "I'm a failure. All  
My life has been a failure. They were right.  
It will not matter if I go and fall;  
I should be free then from this hell's delight.  
I'll never paint. Best let it end to-night.  
I'll slip over the side. I've tried and failed."  
So in the ice-cold in the night he quailed.

Death would be better, death, than this long hell  
Of mockery and surrender and dismay—  
This long defeat of doing nothing well,  
Playing the part too high for him to play.  
"O Death! who hides the sorry thing away,  
Take me; I've failed. I cannot play these cards."  
There came a thundering from the topsail yards.

And then he bit his lips, clenching his mind,  
And staggered out to muster, beating back  
The coward frozen self of him that whined.  
Come what cards might he meant to play the pack.  
"Ai!" screamed the wind; the topsail sheets went clack;  
Ice filled the air with spikes; the grey-backs burst.  
"Here 's Dauber," said the Mate, "on deck the first.

"Why, holy sailor, Dauber, you're a man!  
I took you for a soldier. Up now, come!"  
Up on the yards already they began  
That battle with a gale which strikes men dumb  
The leaping topsail thundered like a drum.  
The frozen snow beat in the face like shots.  
The wind spurt whipping wave-crests into clots.

So up upon the topsail yard again,  
 In the great tempest's fiercest hour, began  
 Probation to the Dauber's soul, of pain  
 Which crowds a century's torment in a span.  
 For the next month the ocean taught this man,  
 And he, in that month's torment, while she wested,  
 Was never warm nor dry, nor full nor rested.

But still it blew, or, if it lulled, it rose  
 Within the hour and blew again; and still  
 The water as it burst aboard her froze.  
 The wind blew off an ice-field, raw and chill,  
 Daunting man's body, tampering with his will;  
 But after thirty days a ghostly sun  
 Gave sickly promise that the storms were done.

## VII

A GREAT grey sea was running up the sky,  
 Desolate birds flew past; their mewings came  
 As that lone water's spiritual cry,  
 Its forlorn voice, its essence, its soul's name.  
 The ship limped in the water as if lame.  
 Then in the forenoon watch to a great shout  
 More sail was made, the reefs were shaken out.

A slant came from the south; the singers stood  
 Clapped to the halliards, hauling to a tune,  
 Old as the sea, a fillip to the blood.  
 The upper topsail rose like a balloon.  
 "So long, Cape Stiff. In Valparaiso soon,"  
 Said one to other, as the ship lay over,  
 Making her course again—again a rover.

Slowly the sea went down as the wind fell.  
 Clear rang the songs, "Hurrah! Cape Horn is bet!"  
 The combless seas were lumping into swell;  
 The leaking fo'c's'les were no longer wet.  
 More sail was made; the watch on deck was set  
 To cleaning up the ruin broken bare  
 Below, aloft, about her, everywhere.

The Dauber, scrubbing out the round-house, found  
Old pantiles pulped among the mouldy gear,  
Washed underneath the bunks and long since drowned  
During the agony of the Cape Horn year.  
He sang in scrubbing, for he had done with fear—  
Fronted the worst and looked it in the face;  
He had got manhood at the testing-place.

Singing he scrubbed, passing his watch below,  
Making the round-house fair; the Bosun watched,  
Bringing his knitting slowly to the toe.  
Sails stretched a mizzen skysail which he patched;  
They thought the Dauber was a bad egg hatched.  
“Daubs,” said the Bosun cheerly, “can you knit?  
I’ve made a Barney’s Bull of this last bit.”

Then, while the Dauber counted, Bosun took  
Some marline from his pocket. “Here,” he said,  
“You want to know square sennit? So fash. Look!  
Eight foxes take, and stop the ends with thread.  
I’ve known an engineer would give his head  
To know square sennit.” As the Bose began,  
The Dauber felt promoted into man.

It was his warrant that he had not failed—  
That the most hard part in his difficult climb  
Had not been past attainment; it was scaled:  
Safe footing showed above the slippery slime.  
He had emerged out of the iron time,  
And knew that he could compass his life’s scheme  
He had the power sufficient to his dream.

Then dinner came, and now the sky was blue.  
The ship was standing north, the Horn was rounded;  
She made a thundering as she weltered through.  
The mighty grey-backs glittered as she bounded.  
More sail was piled upon her; she was hounded  
North, while the wind came; like a stag she ran  
Over grey hills and hollows of seas wan.

She had a white bone in her mouth: she sped;  
Those in the round-house watched her as they ate  
Their meal of pork-fat fried with broken bread.  
"Good old!" they cried. "She 's off; she's gathering gair!"  
Her track was whitening like a Lammas spate.  
"Good old!" they cried. "Oh, give her cloth! Hurrahl  
For three weeks more to Valparaiso Bay!"

"She smells old Vallipo," the Bosun cried.  
"We'll be inside the tier in three weeks more,  
Lying at double-moorings where they ride  
Off of the market, half a mile from shore,  
And bumboat pan, my sons, and figs galore,  
And girls in black mantillas fit to make a  
Poor seaman frantic when they dance the cueca."

Eight bells were made, the watch was changed, and now  
The Mate spoke to the Dauber: "This is better.  
We'll soon be getting mudhooks over the bow.  
She'll make her passage still if this'll let her.  
Oh, run, you drogher! dip your fo'c's'le wetter.  
Well, Dauber, this is better than Cape Horn.  
Them topsails made you wish you'd not been born."

"Yes, sir," the Dauber said. "Now," said the Mate,  
"We've got to smart her up. Them Cape Horn seas  
Have made her paint-work like a rusty grate.  
Oh, didn't them topsails make your fish-hooks freeze?  
A topsail don't pay heed to 'Won't you, please?'  
Well, you have seen Cape Horn, my son; you've learned.  
You've dipped your hand and had your fingers burned."

"And now you'll stow that folly, trying to paint.  
You've had your lesson; you're a sailor now.  
You come on board a female ripe to faint.  
All sorts of slush you'd learned, the Lord knows how.  
Cape Horn has sent you wisdom over the bow  
If you've got sense to take it. You're a sailor.  
My God! before you were a woman's tailor."

"So throw your paints to blazes and have done.  
Words can't describe the silly things you did  
Sitting before your easel in the sun,  
With all your colours on the paint-box lid.  
I blushed for you . . . and then the daubs you hid.  
My God! you'll have more sense now, eh? You've quit?"  
"No, sir." "You've not?" "No, sir." "God give you wit.

"I thought you'd come to wisdom." Thus they talked,  
While the great clipper took her bit and rushed  
Like a skin-glistening stallion not yet baulked,  
Till fire-bright water at her swing-ports gushed;  
Poising and bowing down her fore-foot crushed  
Bubble on glittering bubble; on she went.  
The Dauber watched her, wondering what it meant.

To come, after long months, at rosy dawn,  
Into the placid blue of some great bay.  
Treading the quiet water like a fawn  
Ere yet the morning haze was blown away.  
A rose-flushed figure putting by the grey,  
And anchoring there before the city smoke  
Rose, or the church-bells rang, or men awoke.

And then, in the first light, to see grow clear  
That long-expected haven filled with strangers—  
Alive with men and women; see and hear  
Its clattering market and its money-changers;  
And hear the surf beat, and be free from dangers,  
And watch the crinkled ocean blue with calm  
Drowsing beneath the Trade, beneath the palm.

Hungry for that he worked; the hour went by,  
And still the wind grew, still the clipper strode,  
And now a darkness hid the western sky,  
And sprays came flicking off at the wind's goad.  
She stumbled now, feeling her sail a load.  
The Mate gazed hard to windward, eyed his sail,  
And said the Horn was going to flick her tail.

Boldly he kept it on her till she staggered,  
But still the wind increased; it grew, it grew,  
Darkening the sky, making the water haggard:  
Full of small snow the mighty wester blew.  
"More fun for little fish-hooks," sighed the crew.  
They eyed the taut topgallants stiff like steel;  
A second hand was ordered to the wheel.

The Captain eyed her aft, sucking his lip,  
Feeling the sail too much, but yet refraining  
From putting hobbles on the leaping ship,  
The glad sea-shattering stallion, halter-straining,  
Wind-musical, uproarious, and complaining;  
But, in a gust, he cocked his finger, so:  
"You'd better take them off, before they go."

All saw. They ran at once without the word  
"Leeay! Leeay!" Loud rang the clew-line cries;  
Sam in his bunk within the half-deck heard,  
Stirred in his sleep, and rubbed his drowsy eyes.  
"There go the lower to'gallants." Against the skies  
Rose the thin bellying strips of leaping sail.  
The Dauber was the first man over the rail.

Three to a mast they ran; it was a race.  
"God!" said the Mate; "that Dauber, he can go."  
He watched the runners with an upturned face  
Over the futtocks, struggling heel to toe,  
Up to the topmast cross-trees into the blow  
Where the three sails were leaping. "Dauber wins!"  
The yards were reached, and now the race begins.

Which three will furl their sail first and come down?  
Out to the yard-arm for the leech goes one,  
His hair blown flagwise from a hatless crown,  
His hands at work like fever to be done.  
Out of the gale a fiercer fury spun.  
The three sails leaped together, yanking high,  
Like talons darting up to clutch the sky.

The Dauber on the fore-topgallant yard  
Out at the weather yard-arm was the first  
To lay his hand upon the buntline-barred  
Topgallant yanking to the wester's burst;  
He craned to catch the leech; his comrades cursed;  
One at the buntlines, one with oaths observed,  
"The eye of the outer jib-stay isn't served."

"No," said the Dauber. "No," the man replied.  
They heaved, stowing the sail, not looking round,  
Panting, but full of life and eager-eyed;  
The gale roared at them with its iron sound.  
"That 's you," the Dauber said. His gasket wound  
Swift round the yard, binding the sail in bands;  
There came a gust, the sail leaped from his hands,

So that he saw it high above him, grey,  
And there his mate was falling; quick he clutched  
An arm in oilskins swiftly snatched away.  
A voice said "Christ!" a quick shape stooped and touched,  
Chain struck his hands, ropes shot, the sky was smutched  
With vast black fires that ran, that fell, that furled,  
And then he saw the mast, the small snow hurled.

The fore-topgallant yard far, far aloft,  
And blankness settling on him and great pain;  
And snow beneath his fingers wet and soft  
And topsail-sheet-blocks shaking at the chain.  
He knew it was he who had fallen; then his brain  
Swirled in a circle while he watched the sky.  
Infinite multitudes of snow blew by.

"I thought it was Tom who fell," his brain's voice said  
"Down on the bloody deck!" the Captain screamed.  
The multitudinous little snow-flakes sped,  
His pain was real enough, but all else seemed.  
Si with a bucket ran, the water gleamed  
Tilting upon him; others came, the Mate . . .  
They knelt with eager eyes like things that wait



For other things to come. He saw them there.  
"It will go on," he murmured, watching Si.  
Colours and sounds seemed mixing in the air,  
The pain was stunning him, and the wind went by.  
"More water," said the Mate. "Here, Bosun, try.  
Ask if he 's got a message. Hell, he 's gone!  
Here, Dauber, paints." He said, "It will go on."

Not knowing his meaning rightly, but he spoke  
With the intenseness of a fading soul  
Whose share of Nature's fire turns to smoke,  
Whose hand on Nature's wheel loses control.  
The eager faces glowered red like coal.  
They glowed, the great storm glowed, the sails, the mast.  
"It will go on," he cried aloud, and passed.

Those from the yard came down to tell the tale.  
"He almost had me off," said Tom. "He slipped.  
There came one hell of a jump-like from the sail. .  
He clutched at me and almost had me pipped.  
He caught my 'ris'band, but the oilskin ripped. . .  
It tore clean off. Look here. I was near gone.  
I made a grab to catch him; so did John.

"I caught his arm. My God! I was near done.  
He almost had me over; it was near.  
He hit the ropes and grabbed at every one."  
"Well," said the Mate, "we cannot leave him here.  
Run, Si, and get the half-deck table clear.  
We'll lay him there. Catch hold there, you, and you.  
He 's dead, poor son; there 's nothing more to do."

Night fell, and all night long the Dauber lay  
Covered upon the table; all night long  
The pitiless storm exulted at her prey,  
Huddling the waters with her icy thong.  
But to the covered shape she did no wrong.  
He lay beneath the sailcloth. Bell by bell  
The night wore through; the stars rose, the stars fell.

Blowing most pitiless cold out of clear sky  
The wind roared all night long; and all night through  
The green seas on the deck went washing by,  
Flooding the half-deck; bitter hard it blew.  
But little of it all the Dauber knew—  
The sopping bunks, the floating chests, the wet  
The darkness, and the misery, and the swear.

He was off duty. So it blew all night,  
And when the watches changed the men would come  
Dripping within the door to strike a light  
And stare upon the Dauber lying dumb,  
And say, "He come a cruel thump, poor chum."  
Or, "He'd a-been a fine big man"; or, "He . . .  
A smart young seaman he was getting to be."

Or, "Damn it all, it's what we've all to face! . . .  
I knew another fellow one time . . ." then  
Came a strange tale of death in a strange place  
Out on the sea, in ships, with wandering men.  
In many ways Death puts us into pen.  
The reefers came down tired and looked and slept.  
Below the skylight little dribbles crept

Along the painted woodwork, glistening, slow,  
Following the roll and dripping, never fast,  
But dripping on the quiet form below,  
Like passing time talking to time long past.  
And all night long "Ai, ail" went the wind's blast,  
And creaming water swished below the pale,  
Unheeding body stretched beneath the sail.

At dawn they sewed him up, and at eight bells  
They bore him to the gangway, wading deep,  
Through the green-clutching, white-toothed water-hells  
That flung his carriers over in their sweep.  
They laid an old red ensign on the heap,  
And all hands stood bare-headed, stooping, swaying,  
Washed by the sea while the old man was praying

Out of a borrowed prayer-book. At a sign  
They twitched the ensign back and tipped the grating.  
A creamier bubbling broke the bubbling brine.  
The muffled figure tilted to the weighting;  
It dwindled slowly down, slowly gyrating.  
Some craned to see; it dimmed, it disappeared;  
The last green milky bubble blinked and cleared.

"Mister, shake out your reefs," the Captain called.  
"Out topsail reefs!" the Mate cried; then all hands.  
Hurried, the great sails shook, and all hands hauled,  
Singing that desolate song of lonely lands,  
Of how a lover came in dripping bands,  
Green with the wet and cold, to tell his lover  
That Death was in the sea, and all was over.

Fair came the falling wind; a seaman said  
The Dauber was a Jonah; once again  
The clipper held her course, showing red lead,  
Shattering the sea-tops into golden rain.  
The waves bowed down before her like blown grain;  
Onwards she thundered, on; her voyage was short,  
Before the tier's bells rang her into port.

Cheerly they rang her in, those beating bells,  
The new-come beauty stately from the sea,  
Whitening the blue heave of the drowsy swells,  
Treading the bubbles down. With three times three  
They cheered her moving beauty in, and she  
Came to her berth so noble, so superb;  
Swayed like a queen, and answered to the curb.

Then in the sunset's flush they went aloft,  
And unbent sails in that most lovely hour  
When the light gentles and the wind is soft,  
And beauty in the heart breaks like a flower.  
Working aloft they saw the mountain tower,  
Snow to the peak; they heard the launchmen shout;  
And bright along the bay the lights came out.

And then the night fell dark, and all night long  
The pointed mountain pointed at the stars,  
Frozen, alert, austere; the eagle's song  
Screamed from her desolate screes and splintered scars.  
On her intense crags where the air is sparse  
The stars looked down; their many golden eyes  
Watched her and burned, burned out, and came to rise.

Silent the finger of the summit stood,  
Icy in pure, thin air, glittering with snows.  
Then the sun's coming turned the peak to blood,  
And in the rest-house the muleteers arose.  
And all day long, where only the eagle goes,  
Stones, loosened by the sun, fall; the stones falling  
Fill empty gorge on gorge with echoes calling.



## EXPLANATIONS OF SOME OF THE SEA TERMS USED IN THE POEM

- BACKSTAYS.**—Wire ropes which support the masts against lateral and after strains.
- BARNEY'S BULL.**—A figure in marine proverb. A jewel in marine repartee.
- BELLS.**—Two bells (one forward, one aft), which are struck every half-hour in a certain manner to mark the passage of the watches.
- BITTS.**—Strong wooden structures (built round each mast) upon which running rigging is secured.
- BLOCK.**—A sheaved pulley.
- BOATSWAIN.**—A supernumerary or idler, generally attached to the mate's watch, and holding considerable authority over the crew.
- BOUILLI TIN.**—Any tin that contains, or has contained, preserved meat.
- BOWS.**—The forward extremity of a ship.
- BRACE-BLOCKS.**—Pulleys through which the braces travel.
- BRACES.**—Ropes by which the yards are inclined forward or aft.
- BUMBOAT PAN.**—Soft bread sold by the bumboat man, a kind of sea costermonger who trades with ships in port.
- BUNT.**—Those cloths of a square sail which are nearest to the mast when the sail is set. The central portion of a furled square sail. The human abdomen (figuratively).
- BUNTLINES.**—Ropes which help to confine square sails to the yards in the operation of furling.
- CHOCKS.**—Wooden stands on which the boats rest.
- CLEATS.**—Iron or wooden contrivances to which ropes may be secured.
- CLEW-LINES.**—Ropes by which the lower corners of square sails are lifted.
- CLEWS.**—The lower corners of square sails.
- CLIPPER.**—A title of honour given to ships of more than usual speed and beauty.
- COAMING.**—The raised rim of a hatchway; a barrier at a doorway to keep water from entering.
- COURSES.**—The large square sails set upon the lower yards of sailing ships. The *mizzen* course is called the "crojick."

**CRINGLED.**—Fitted with iron rings or cringles, many of which are let into sails or sail-roping for various purposes.

**CROJICK OR CROSS-JACK.**—A square sail set upon the lower yard of the mizzen-mast.

**DUNGAREES.**—Thin blue or khaki-coloured overalls made from coconut fibre.

**FAIRLEADS.**—Rings of wood or iron by means of which running rigging is led in any direction.

**FIFE-RAILS.**—Strong wooden shelves fitted with iron pins, to which ropes may be secured.

**FISH-HOOKS.**—*I.e.*, fingers.

**FOOT-ROPES.**—Ropes on which men stand when working aloft.

**FO'C'S'LE.**—The cabin or cabins in which the men are berthed. It is usually an iron deck-house divided through the middle into two compartments for the two watches, and fitted with wooden bunks. Sometimes it is even fitted with lockers and an iron water-tank.

**FOXES.**—Strands, yarns, or arrangements of yarns of rope.

**FRAP.**—To wrap round with rope.

**FREEING-PORTS.**—Iron doors in the ship's side which open outwards to free the decks of water.

**FUTTOCK-SHROUDS.**—Iron bars to which the topmast rigging is secured. As they project outward and upward from the masts they are difficult to clamber over.

**GALLEY.**—The ship's kitchen.

**GANTLINE (GIRTLINE).**—A rope used for the sending of sails up and down from aloft.

**GASKETS.**—Ropes by which the sails are secured in furling.

**HALF-DECK.**—A cabin or apartment in which the apprentices are berthed. Its situation is usually the ship's waist; but it is sometimes further aft, and occasionally it is under the poop or even right forward under the top-gallant fo'c's'le.

**HALLIARDS.**—Ropes by which sails are hoisted.

**HARNESS-ROOM.**—An office or room from which the salt meat is issued, and in which it is sometimes stored.

**HAWSE.**—The bows or forward end of a ship.

**HEAD.**—The forward part of a ship. That upper edge of a square sail which is attached to the yard.

**HOUSE-FLAG.**—The special flag of the firm to which a ship belongs.

**IDLERS.**—The members of the round-house mess, generally consisting of the carpenter, cook, sailmaker, boatswain, painter, etc., are known as the idlers.

**JACK or JACKSTAY.**—An iron bar (fitted along all yards in sailing ships) to which the head of a square sail is secured when bent.

**KITES.**—Light upper sails.

**LEECHES.**—The outer edges of square sails. In furling some square sails the leech is dragged inwards till it lies level with the head upon the surface of the yard. This is done by the first man who gets upon the yard, beginning at the weather side.

**LOGSHIP.**—A contrivance by which a ship's speed is measured.

**LOWER TOPSAIL.**—The second sail from the deck on square-rigged masts. It is a very strong, important sail.

**MARLINE.**—Tarry line or coarse string made of rope-yarns twisted together.

**MATE.**—The First or Chief Mate is generally called the Mate.

**MIZZEN-TOPMAST-HEAD.**—The summit of the second of the three or four spars which make the complete mizzen-mast.

**MUDHOOKS.**—Anchors.

**PINS.**—Iron or wooden bars to which running rigging is secured.

**POINTING.**—A kind of neat plait with which ropes are sometimes ended off or decorated.

**POOP-BREAK.**—The forward end of the after superstructure.

**RATLINES.**—The rope steps placed across the shrouds to enable the seamen to go aloft.

**REEFERS.**—Apprentices.

**REEF-POINTS.**—Ropes by which the area of some sails may be reduced in the operation of reefing. Reef-points are securely fixed to the sails fitted with them, and when not in use their ends patter continually upon the canvas with a gentle drumming noise.

**REEL.**—A part of the machinery used with a logship.

**ROUND-HOUSE.**—A cabin (of all shapes except round) in which the idlers are berthed.

**ROYALS.**—Light upper square sails; the fourth, fifth, or sixth sails from the deck according to the mast's rig.



**SAIL-ROOM.**—A large room or compartment in which the ship's sails are stored.

**"SAILS."**—The sailmaker is meant.

**SCUTTLE-BUTT.**—A cask containing fresh water.

**SHACKLES.**—Rope handles for a sea-chest.

**SHEET-BLOCKS.**—Iron blocks, by means of which sails are sheeted home. In any violent wind they beat upon the mast with great rapidity and force.

**SHEETS.**—Ropes or chains which extend the lower corners of square sails in the operation of sheeting home.

**SHIFTING SUITS (OF SAILS).**—The operation of removing a ship's sails and replacing them with others.

**SHROUDS.**—Wire ropes of great strength, which support lateral strains on masts.

**SHROUD-SCREWS.**—Iron contrivances by which shrouds are hove taut.

**SIDELIGHTS.**—A sailing ship carries two of these between sunset and sunrise: one green, to starboard; one red, to port.

**SIGHTS.**—Observations to help in the finding of a ship's position.

**SKID.**—A wooden contrivance on which ships' boats rest.

**SKYSAILS.**—The uppermost square sails; the fifth, sixth, or seventh sails from the deck according to the mast's rig.

**SLATTING.**—The noise made by sails flogging in the wind.

**SLUSH.**—Grease, melted fat.

**SOUTH-WESTER.**—A kind of oilskin-hat. A gale from the south-west.

**SPIT BROWN.**—To chew tobacco.

**SQUARE SENNIT.**—A cunning plait which makes a four-square bar.

**STAYSAILS.**—Fore and aft sails set upon the stays between the masts.

**STOW.**—To furl.

**STROP** (the, putting on).—A strop is a grummet or rope ring. The two players kneel down facing each other, the strop is placed over their heads, and the men then try to pull each other over by the strength of their neck-muscles.

**SWING PORTS.**—Iron doors in the ship's side which open outwards to free the decks from water.

**TACKLE** (pronounced "taykel").—Blocks, ropes, pulleys, etc.

**TAKE A CAULK.**—To sleep upon the deck.

**TOPSAILS.**—The second and third sails from the deck on the masts of a modern square-rigged ship are known as the lower and upper topsails.

TRUCKS.—The summits of the masts.

UPPER TOPSAIL.—The third square sail from the deck on the masts of square-rigged ships.

YARDS.—The steel or wooden spars (placed across masts) from which square sails are set.



## THE DAFFODIL FIELDS

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## THE DAFFODIL FIELDS

### I

**B**ETWEEN the barren pasture and the wood  
There is a patch of poultry-stricken grass,  
Where, in old time, Ryemeadows' Farmhouse stood,  
And human fate brought tragic things to pass.  
A spring comes bubbling up there, cold as glass,  
It bubbles down, crusting the leaves with lime,  
Babbling the self-same song that it has sung through time.

Ducks gobble at the selvage of the brook,  
But still it slips away, the cold hill-spring,  
Past the Ryemeadows' lonely woodland nook  
Where many a stubble gray-goose preens her wing,  
On, by the woodland side. You hear it sing  
Past the lone copse where poachers set their wires,  
Past the green hill once grim with sacrificial fires.

Another water joins it; then it turns,  
Runs through the Ponton Wood, still turning west,  
Past foxgloves, Canterbury bells, and ferns,  
And many a blackbird's, many a thrush's nest;  
The cattle tread it there; then, with a zest  
It sparkles out, babbling its pretty chatter  
Through Foxholes Farm, where it gives white-faced cattle  
water.

Under the road it runs, and now it slips  
Past the great ploughland, babbling, drop and linn,  
To the moss'd stumps of elm trees which it lips,  
And blackberry-bramble-trails where eddies spin.  
Then, on its left, some short-grassed fields begin,  
Red-clayed and pleasant, which the young spring fills  
With the never-quiet joy of dancing daffodils.

There are three fields where daffodils are found;  
The grass is dotted blue-gray with their leaves;  
Their nodding beauty shakes along the ground  
Up to a fir-clump shutting out the eaves  
Of an old farm where always the wind grieves  
High in the fir boughs, moaning; people call  
This farm The Roughs, but some call it the Poor Maid's Hall.

There, when the first green shoots of tender corn  
Show on the plough; when the first drift of white  
Stars the black branches of the spiky thorn,  
And afternoons are warm and evenings light,  
The shivering daffodils do take delight,  
Shaking beside the brook, and grass comes green,  
And blue dog-violets come and glistening celandine.

And there the pickers come, picking for town  
Those dancing daffodils; all day they pick;  
Hard-featured women, weather-beaten brown,  
Or swarthy-red, the colour of old brick.  
At noon they break their meats under the rick.  
The smoke of all three farms lifts blue in air  
As though man's passionate mind had never suffered there.

And sometimes as they rest an old man comes,  
Shepherd or carter, to the hedgerow-side,  
And looks upon their gangrel tribe, and hums,  
And thinks all gone to wreck since master died;  
And sighs over a passionate harvest-tide  
Which Death's red sickle reaped under those hills,  
There, in the quiet fields among the daffodils.

When this most tragic fate had time and place,  
And human hearts and minds to show it by,  
Ryemeadows' Farmhouse was in evil case:  
Its master, Nicholas Gray, was like to die.  
He lay in bed, watching the windy sky,  
Where all the rooks were homing on slow wings,  
Cawing, or blackly circling in enormous rings.

With a sick brain he watched them; then he took  
Paper and pen, and wrote in straggling hand  
(Like spider's legs, so much his fingers shook)  
Word to the friends who held the adjoining land,  
Bidding them come; no more he could command  
His fingers twitching to the feebling blood;  
He watched his last day's sun dip down behind the wood,

While all his life's thoughts surged about his brain:  
Memories and pictures clear, and faces known—  
Long dead, perhaps; he was a child again,  
Treading a threshold in the dark alone.  
Then back the present surged, making him moan.  
He asked if Keir had come yet. "No," they said.  
"Nor Occleve?" "No." He moaned: "Come soon or I'll be  
dead."

The names like live things wandered in his mind:  
"Charles Occleve of The Roughs," and "Rowland Keir—  
Keir of the Foxholes"; but his brain was blind,  
A blind old alley in the storm of the year,  
Baffling the traveller life with "No way here,"  
For all his lantern raised; life would not tread  
Within that brain again, along those pathways red.

Soon all was dimmed but in the heaven one star.  
"I'll hold to that," he said; then footsteps stirred.  
Down in the court a voice said, "Here they are,"  
And one, "He's almost gone." The sick man heard.  
"Oh God, be quick," he moaned. "Only one word.  
Keir! Occleve! Let them come. Why don't they come?  
Why stop to tell them that?—the devil strike you dumb.

"I'm neither doll nor dead; come in, come in.  
Curse you, you women, quick," the sick man flamed.  
"I shall be dead before I can begin.  
A sick man's womaned-mad, and nursed and damed."  
Death had him by the throat; his wrath was tamed.  
"Come in," he fumed; "Stop muttering at the door."  
The friends came in; a creaking ran across the floor.



"Now, Nick, how goes it, man?" said Occleve. "Oh"  
The dying man replied, "I am dying; past;  
Mercy of God, I die, I'm going to go.  
But I have much to tell you if I last.  
Come near me, Occleve, Keir. I am sinking fast,  
And all my kin are coming; there, look there.  
All the old long dead Grays are moving in the air.

"It is my Michael that I called you for;  
My son, abroad, at school still, over sea.  
See if that hag is listening at the door.  
No? Shut the door; don't lock it, let it be.  
No faith is kept to dying men like me.  
I am dipped deep and dying, bankrupt, done;  
I leave not even a farthing to my lovely son.

"Neighbours, these many years our children played,  
Down in the fields together, down the brook;  
Your Mary, Keir, the girl, the bonny maid,  
And Occleve's Lion, always at his book;  
Them and my Michael: dear, what joy they took  
Picking the daffodils; such friends they've been—  
My boy and Occleve's boy and Mary Keir for queen.

"I had made plans; but I am done with, I.  
Give me the wine. I have to ask you this:  
I can leave Michael nothing, and I die.  
By all our friendship used to be and is,  
Help him, old friends. Don't let my Michael miss  
The schooling I've begun. Give him his chance.  
He does not know I am ill; I kept him there in France.

"Saving expense; each penny counts. Oh, friends,  
Help him another year; help him to take  
His full diploma when the training ends,  
So that my ruin won't be his. Oh, make  
This sacrifice for our old friendship's sake,  
And God will pay you; for I see God's hand  
Pass in most marvellous ways on souls: I understand

"How just rewards are given for man's deeds  
And judgment strikes the soul. The wine there, wine.  
Life is the daily thing man never heeds.  
It is ablaze with sign and countersign.  
Michael will not forget; that son of mine  
Is a rare son, my friends; he will go far.  
I shall behold his course from where the blessed are."

"Why, Nick," said Occleve, "come, man. Gather hold.  
Rouse up. You've given way. If times are bad,  
Times must be bettering, master; so be bold;  
Lift up your spirit, Nicholas, and be glad.  
Michael's as much to me as my dear lad.  
I'll see he takes his school." "And I," said Keir.  
"Set you no keep by that, but be at rest, my dear."

"We'll see your Michael started on the road."  
"But there," said Occleve, "Nick's not going to die.  
Out of the ruts, good nag, now; zook the load.  
Pull up, man. Death! Death and the fiend defy.  
We'll bring the farm round for you, Keir and I.  
Put heart at rest and get your health." "Ah, no,"  
The sick man faintly answered, "I have got to go."

Still troubled in his mind, the sick man tossed.  
"Old friends," he said, "I once had hoped to see  
Mary and Michael wed, but fates are crossed,  
And Michael starts with nothing left by me.  
Still, if he loves her, will you let it be?  
So in the grave, maybe, when I am gone,  
I'll know my hope fulfilled, and see the plan go on."

"I judge by hearts, not money," answered Keir.  
"If Michael suits in that and suits my maid,  
I promise you, let Occleve witness here,  
He shall be free for me to drive his trade.  
Free, ay, and welcome, too. Be not afraid,  
I'll stand by Michael as I hope some friend  
Will stand beside my girl in case my own life end."

"And I," said Occleve; but the sick man seemed  
Still ill at ease. "My friends," he said, "my friends,  
Michael may come to all that I have dreamed,  
But he's a wild yarn full of broken ends.  
So far his life in France has made amends.  
God grant he steady so; but girls and drink  
Once brought him near to hell, ay, to the very brink.

"There is a running vein of wildness in him:  
Wildness and looseness both, which vices make  
That woman's task a hard one who would win him:  
His life depends upon the course you take.  
He is a fiery-mettled colt to break,  
And one to curb, one to be curbed, remember."  
The dying voice died down, the fire left the ember.

But once again it flamed. "Ah me," he cried;  
"Our secret sins take body in our sons,  
To haunt our age with what we put aside.  
I was a devil for the women once.  
He is as I was. Beauty like the sun's;  
Within, all water; minded like the moon.  
Go now. I sinned. I die. I shall be punished soon."

The two friends tiptoed to the room below.  
There, till the woman came to them, they told  
Of brave adventures in the long ago,  
Ere Nick and they had thought of growing old;  
Snipe-shooting in the marshlands in the cold,  
Old soldiering days as yeomen, days at fairs,  
Days that had sent Nick tired to those self-same chairs.

They vowed to pay the schooling for his son.  
They talked of Michael, testing men's report,  
How the young student was a lively one,  
Handsome and passionate both, and fond of sport,  
Eager for fun, quick-witted in retort.  
The girls' hearts quick to see him cocking by,  
Young April on a blood horse, with a roving eye.

And, as they talked about the lad, Keir asked  
If Occleve's son had not, at one time, been  
Heartsick for Mary, though with passion masked.  
"Ay," Occleve said: "time was. At seventeen.  
It took him hard, it ran his ribs all lean,  
All of a summer; but it passed, it died.  
Her fancying Michael better touched my Lion's pride."

Mice flickered from the wainscot to the press,  
Nibbling at crumbs, rattling to shelter, squeaking.  
Each ticking in the clock's womb made life less;  
Oil slowly dropped from where the lamp was leaking.  
At times the old nurse set the staircase creaking,  
Harked to the sleeper's breath, made sure, returned,  
Answered the questioning eyes, then wept. The great stars  
burned.

"Listen," said Occleve, "listen, Rowland. Hark."  
"It's Mary, come with Lion," answered Keir;  
"They said they'd come together after dark."  
He went to door and called "Come in, my dear."  
The burning wood log blazed with sudden cheer,  
So that a glowing lighted all the room.  
His daughter Mary entered from the outer gloom.

The wind had brought the blood into her cheek,  
Heightening her beauty, but her great gray eyes  
Were troubled with a fear she could not speak.  
Firm, scarlet lips she had, not made for lies.  
Gentle she seemed, pure-natured, thoughtful, wise.  
And when she asked what turn the sickness took,  
Her voice's passing pureness on a low note shook.

Young Lion Occleve entered at her side,  
A well-built, clever man, unduly grave,  
One whose repute already travelled wide  
For skill in breeding beasts. His features gave  
Promise of brilliant mind, far-seeing, brave,  
One who would travel far. His manly grace  
Grew wistful when his eyes were turned on Mary's face. ,

"Tell me," said Mary, "what did doctor say?  
How ill is he? What chance of life has he?  
The cowman said he couldn't last the day,  
And only yesterday he joked with me."  
"We must be meek," the nurse said; "such things be."  
"There's little hope," said Keir: "he's dying, sinking."  
"Dying without his son," the young girl's heart was thinking.

"Does Michael know?" she asked. "Has he been called?"  
A slow confusion reddened on the faces,  
As when one light neglect leaves friends appalled.  
"No time to think," said nurse, "in such like cases."  
Old Occleve stooped and fumbled with his laces.  
"Let be," he said; "there's always time for sorrow.  
He could not come in time; he shall be called to-morrow."

"There is a chance," she cried, "there always is.  
Poor Mr. Gray might rally, might live on.  
Oh, I must telegraph to tell him this.  
Would it were day still and the message gone."  
She rose, her breath came fast, her gray eyes shone.  
She said, "Come, Lion; see me through the wood.  
Michael must know." Keir sighed. "Girl, it will do no good.

"Our friend is on the brink and almost passed."  
"All the more need," she said; "for word to go;  
Michael could well arrive before the last.  
He'd see his father's face at least. I know  
The office may be closed; but even so,  
Father, I must. Come, Lion." Out they went,  
Into the roaring woodland where the saplings bent.

Like breakers of the sea the leafless branches  
Swished, bowing down, rolling like water, roaring  
Like the sea's welcome when the clipper launches  
And full affronted tideways call to warring.  
Daffodils glimmered underfoot, the flooring  
Of the earthly woodland smelt like torn-up moss;  
Stones in the path showed white, and rabbits ran across.

They climbed the rise and struck into the ride,  
Talking of death, while Lion, sick at heart,  
Thought of the woman walking at his side,  
And as he talked his spirit stood apart,  
Old passion for her made his being smart,  
Rankling within. Her thought for Michael ran  
Like glory and like poison through his inner man.

"This will break Michael's heart," he said at length.  
"Poor Michael," she replied; "they wasted hours.  
He loved his father so. God give him strength.  
This is a cruel thing this life of ours."  
The windy woodland glimmered with shut flowers,  
White wood anemones that the wind blew down.  
The valley opened wide beyond the starry town.

"Ten," clanged out of the belfry. Lion stayed,  
One hand upon a many-carven bole.  
"Mary," he said. "Dear, my beloved maid,  
I love you, dear one, from my very soul."  
Her beauty in the dusk destroyed control.  
"Mary, my dear, I've loved you all these years."  
"Oh, Lion, no," she murmured, choking back her tears.

"I love you," he repeated. "Five years since  
This thing began between us: every day,  
Oh sweet, the thought of you has made me wince;  
The thought of you, my sweet, the look, the way.  
It's only you, whether I work or pray,  
You and the hope of you, sweet you, dear you.  
I never spoke before; now it has broken through.

"Oh, my belovéd, can you care for me?"  
She shook her head. "Oh, hush, oh, Lion dear,  
Don't speak of love, for it can never be  
Between us two, never, however near.  
Come on, my friend, we must not linger here."  
White to the lips she spoke; he saw her face  
White in the darkness by him in the windy place.

"Mary, in time you could, perhaps," he pleaded.  
"No," she replied, "no, Lion; never, no."  
Over the stars the boughs burst and receded.  
The nobleness of Love comes in Love's woe.  
"God bless you then, beloved, let us go.  
Come on," he said, "and if I gave you pain,  
Forget it, dear; be sure I never will again."

They stepped together down the ride, their feet  
Slipped on loose stones. Little was said; his fate,  
Staked on a kingly cast, had met defeat.  
Nothing remained but to endure and wait.  
She was still wonderful, and life still great.  
Great in that bitter instant side by side,  
Hallowed by thoughts of death there in the blinded ride.

He heard her breathing by him, saw her face  
Dim, looking straight ahead; her feet by his  
Kept time beside him, giving life a grace;  
Night made the moment full of mysteries.  
"You are beautiful," he thought; "and life is this:  
Walking a windy night while men are dying,  
To cry for one to come, and none to heed our crying."

"Mary," he said, "are you in love with him,  
With Michael? Tell me. We are friends, we three."  
They paused to face each other in the dim.  
"Tell me," he urged. "Yes, Lion," answered she;  
"I love him, but he does not care for me.  
I trust your generous mind, dear; now you know,  
You, who have been my brother, how our fortunes go.

"Now come; the message waits." The heavens cleared,  
Cleared, and were starry as they trod the ride.  
Chequered by tossing boughs the moon appeared;  
A whistling reached them from the Hall House side;  
Climbing, the whistler came. A brown owl cried.  
The whistler paused to answer, sending far  
That haunting, hunting note. The echoes laughed Aha!

Something about the calling made them start.  
Again the owl note laughed; the ringing cry  
Made the blood quicken within Mary's heart.  
Like a dead leaf a brown owl floated by.  
"Michael?" said Lion. "Hush." An owl's reply  
Came down the wind; they waited; then the man,  
Content, resumed his walk, a merry song began.

"Michael," they cried together. "Michael, you?"  
"Who calls?" the singer answered. "Where away?  
Is that you, Mary?" Then with glad halloo  
The singer ran to meet them on the way.  
It was their Michael; in the moonlight gray,  
They made warm welcome; under tossing boughs,  
They met and told the fate darkening Ryemeadows' House.

As they returned at speed their comrade spoke  
Strangely and lightly of his coming home,  
Saying that leaving France had been a joke,  
But that events now proved him wise to come.  
Down the steep 'scarpment to the house they clomb,  
And Michael faltered in his pace; they heard  
How dumb rebellion in the much-wronged cattle stirred.

And as they came, high, from the sick man's room,  
Old Gray burst out a-singing of the light  
Streaming upon him from the outer gloom,  
As his eyes dying gave him mental sight.  
"Triumphing swords," he carolled, "in the bright:  
Oh fire, Oh beauty fire," and fell back dead.  
Occleve took Michael up to kneel beside the bed.

So the night passed; the noisy wind went down;  
The half-burnt moon her starry trackway rode.  
Then the first fire was lighted in the town,  
And the first carter stacked his early load.  
Upon the farm's drawn blinds the morning glowed;  
And down the valley, with little clucks and trills,  
The dancing waters danced by dancing daffodils.



## II

THEY buried Gray; his gear was sold; his farm  
Passed to another tenant. Thus men go;  
The dropped sword passes to another arm,  
And different waters in the river flow.  
His two old faithful friends let Michael know  
His father's ruin and their promise. Keir  
Brought him to stay at Foxholes till a path was clear.

There, when the sale was over, all three met  
To talk about the future and to find  
Upon what project Michael's heart was set.  
Gentle the two old men were, thoughtful, kind.  
They urged the youth to speak his inmost mind,  
For they would compass what he chose; they told  
How he might end his training; they would find the gold.

"Thanks, but I cannot," Michael said. He smiled.  
"Cannot. They've kicked me out. I've been expelled;  
Kicked out for good and all for being wild.  
They stopped our evening leave, and I rebelled.  
I am a gentle soul until compelled.  
And then I put my ears back. The old fool  
Said that my longer presence might inflame the school.

"And I am glad, for I have had my fill  
Of farming by the book with those old fools,  
Exhausted talkatives whose blood is still,  
Who strive to bind a living man with rules.  
This fettered kind of life, these laws, these schools,  
These codes, these checks, what are they but the clogs  
Made by collected sheep to mortify the dogs?

"And I have had enough of them; and now  
I make an end of them. I want to go  
Somewhere where man has never used a plough,  
Nor ever read a book; where clean winds blow,  
And passionate blood is not its owner's foe,  
And land is for the asking for it. There  
Man can create a life and have the open air.

"The River Plate 's the country. There, I know,  
A man like me can thrive. There, on the range,  
The cattle pass like tides; they ebb and flow,  
And life is changeless in unending change,  
And one can ride all day, and all day strange,  
Strange, never trodden, fenceless, waiting there,  
To feed unending cattle for the men who dare.

"There I should have a chance; this land 's too old."  
Old Occleve grunted at the young man's mood;  
Keir, who was losing money, thought him bold,  
And thought the scheme for emigration good.  
He said that, if he wished to go, he should.  
South to the pampas, there to learn the trade.  
Old Occleve thought it mad, but no objection made.

So it was settled that the lad should start,  
A place was found for him, a berth was taken;  
And Michael's beauty plucked at Mary's heart,  
And now the fabric of their lives were shaken:  
For now the hour's nearness made love waken  
In Michael's heart for Mary. Now Time's guile  
Granted her passionate prayer, nor let her see his smile.

Granted his greatest gifts; a night time came  
When the two walking down the water learned  
That life till then had only been a name;  
Love had unsealed their spirits: they discerned.  
Mutely, at moth time there, their spirits yearned.  
"I shall be gone three years, dear soul," he said.  
"Dear, will you wait for me?" "I will," replied the maid.

So troth was pledged between them. Keir received  
Michael as Mary's suitor, feeling sure  
That the lad's fortunes would be soon retrieved,  
Having a woman's promise as a lure.  
The three years' wait would teach them to endure.  
He bade them love and prosper and be glad.  
And fast the day drew near that was to take the lad.

Cowslips had come along the bubbling brook,  
Cowslips and oxlips rare, and in the wood  
The many-blossomed stalks of bluebells shook;  
The outward beauty fed their mental mood.  
Thought of the parting stabbed her as he wooed,  
Walking the brook with her, and day by day,  
The precious fortnight's grace dropped, wasted, slipped away.

Till only one clear day remained to her:  
One whole clear, precious day, before he sailed,  
Some forty hours, no more, to minister  
To months of bleakness before which she quailed.  
Mist rose along the brook; the corncrake railed;  
Dim red the sunset burned. He bade her come  
Into the wood with him; they went, the night came dumb.

Still as high June, the very water's noise  
Seemed but a breathing of the earth; the flowers  
Stood in the dim like souls without a voice.  
The wood's conspiracy of occult powers  
Drew all about them, and for hours on hours  
No murmur shook the oaks, the stars did house  
Their lights like lamps upon those never-moving boughs.

Under their feet the woodland sloped away  
Down to the valley, where the farmhouse lights  
Were sparks in the expanse the moon made gray.  
June's very breast was bare this night of nights.  
Moths blundered up against them, grays and whites  
Moved on the darkness where the moths were out,  
Nosing for sticky sweet with trembling uncurled snout.

But all this beauty was but music played,  
While the high pageant of their hearts prepared.  
A spirit thrilled between them, man to maid,  
Mind flowed in mind, the inner heart was bared,  
They needed not to tell how much each cared;  
All the soul's strength was at the other's soul.  
Flesh was away awhile, a glory made them whole.

Nothing was said by them; they understood,  
They searched each other's eyes without a sound,  
Alone with moonlight in the heart of the wood,  
Knowing the stars and all the soul of the ground.  
"Mary," he murmured. "Come." His arms went round,  
A white moth glimmered by, the woods were hushed;  
The rose at Mary's bosom dropped its petals, crushed.

No word profaned the peace of that glad giving,  
But the warm dimness of the night stood still,  
Drawing all beauty to the point of living,  
There in the beech-tree's shadow on the hill.  
Spirit to spirit murmured; mingling will  
Made them one being; Time's decaying thought  
Fell from them like a rag; it was the soul they sought.

The moonlight found an opening in the boughs;  
It entered in, it filled that sacred place  
With consecration on the throbbing brows;  
It came with benediction and with grace.  
A whispering came from face to yearning face:  
"Beloved, will you wait for me?" "My own."  
"I shall be gone three years, you will be left alone;

"You'll trust and wait for me?" "Yes, yes," she sighed;  
She would wait any term of years, all time—  
So faithful to first love these souls abide,  
Carrying a man's soul with them as they climb.  
Life was all flower to them; the church bells' chime  
Rang out the burning hour ere they had sealed  
Love's charter there below the June sky's starry field.

Sweetly the church bells' music reached the wood,  
Chiming an old slow tune of some old hymn.  
Calling them back to life from where they stood  
Under the moonlit beech-tree gray and dim.  
"Mary," he murmured; pressing close to him,  
Her kiss came on the gift he gave her there,  
A silken scarf that bore her name worked in his hair.

But still the two affixed their hands and seals  
To a life compact witnessed by the sky,  
Where the great planets drove their glittering wheels,  
Bringing conflicting fate, making men die.  
They loved, and she would wait, and he would try.  
"Oh, beauty of my love," "My lovely man,"  
So beauty made them noble for their little span.

Time cannot pause, however dear the wooer;  
The moon declined, the sunrise came, the hours,  
Left to the lovers, dwindled swiftly fewer,  
Even as the seeds from dandelion-flowers  
Blow, one by one, until the bare stalk cowers,  
And the June grass grows over; even so  
Daffodil-picker Time took from their lives the glow,

Stole their last walk along the three green fields,  
Their latest hour together; he took, he stole  
The white contentment that a true love yields;  
He took the triumph out of Mary's soul.  
Now she must lie awake and blow the coal  
Of sorrow of heart. The parting hour came;  
They kissed their last good-bye, murmuring the other's name.

Then the flag waved, the engine snorted, then  
Slowly the couplings tautened, and the train  
Moved, bearing off from her her man of men;  
She looked towards its going blind with pain.  
Her father turned and drove her home again.  
It was a different home. Awhile she tried  
To cook the dinner there, but flung her down and cried.

Then in the dusk she wandered down the brook,  
Treading again the trackway trod of old,  
When she could hold her loved one in a look.  
The night was all unlike those nights of gold.  
Michael was gone, and all the April old,  
Withered and hidden. Life was full of ills;  
She flung her down and cried i' the withered daffodils

## III

THE steaming river loitered like old blood  
On which the tugboat bearing Michael beat,  
Past whitened horse bones sticking in the mud.  
The reed stems looked like metal in the heat.  
Then the banks fell away, and there were neat,  
Red herds of sullen cattle drifting slow.  
A fish leaped, making rings, making the dead blood flow.

Wormed hard-wood piles were driv'n in the river bank,  
The steamer threshed alongside with sick screws  
Churning the mud below her till it stank;  
Big butcher-bubbles burst among the ooze.  
There Michael went ashore; as glad to lose  
One not a native there, the Gauchos flung  
His broken gear ashore, one waved, a bell was rung.

The bowfast was cast off, the screw revolved,  
Making a bloodier bubbling; rattling rope  
Fell to the hatch, the engine's tune resolved  
Into its steadier beat of rise and slope;  
The steamer went her way; and Michael's hope  
Died as she lessened; he was there alone.  
The lowing of the cattle made a gradual moan.

He thought of Mary, but the thought was dim,  
That was another life, lived long before.  
His mind was in new worlds which altered him.  
The startling present left no room for more.  
The sullen river lipped, the sky, the shore  
Were vaster than of old, and lonely, lonely  
Sky and low hills of grass and moaning cattle only.

But for a hut bestrewn with skulls of beeves,  
Round which the flies danced, where an Indian girl  
Bleared at him from her eyes' ophthalmic caves,  
Grinning a welcome; with a throaty skirl,  
She offered him herself; but he, the churl,  
Stared till she thought him fool; she turned, she sat,  
Scratched in her short, black hair, chewed a cigar and spat.

Up, on the rise, the cattle bunched; the bulls  
Drew to the front with menace, pawing bold,  
Snatching the grass-roots out with sudden pulls,  
The distant cattle raised their heads; the wold  
Grew dusty at the top; a waggon rolled,  
Drawn by a bickering team of mules whose eyes  
Were yellow like their teeth and bared and full of vice.

Down to the jetty came the jingling team,  
An Irish cowboy driving, while a Greek  
Beside him urged the mules with blow and scream.  
They cheered the Indian girl and stopped to speak,  
Then lifting her aloft they kissed her cheek,  
Calling to Michael to be quick aboard,  
Or they (they said) would fall from virtue, by the Lord.

So Michael climbed aboard, and all day long  
He drove the cattle range, rise after rise,  
Dotted with limber shorthorns grazing strong,  
Cropping sweet-tasted pasture, switching flies;  
Dull trouble brooded in their smoky eyes.  
Some horsemen watched them. As the sun went down,  
The waggon reached the estancia builded like a town.

With wide corráles where the horses squealed,  
Biting and lashing out; some half-wild hounds  
Gnawed at the cowbones littered on the field,  
Or made the stallions stretch their picket bounds.  
Some hides were drying; horsemen came from rounds,  
Unsaddled stiff, and turned their mounts to feed,  
And then brewed bitter drink and sucked it through a reed.

The Irishman removed his pipe and spoke:  
"You take a fool's advice," he said. "Return.  
Go back where you belong before you're broke;  
You'll spoil more clothes at this job than you'll earn;  
It's living death, and when you die you'll burn:  
Body and soul it takes you. Quit it. No?  
Don't say I never told you, then. Amigos. Ho.

"Here comes a Gringo; make him pay his shot.  
Pay up your footing, Michael; rum 's the word,  
It suits my genius, and I need a lot."  
So the great cauldron full was mixed and stirred.  
And all night long the startled cattle heard  
Shouting and shooting, and the moon beheld  
Mobs of dim, struggling men, who fired guns and yelled

That they were Abel Brown just come to town,  
Michael among them. By a bonfire some  
Betted on red and black for money down,  
Snatching their clinking winnings, eager, dumb.  
Some danced, unclad, rubbing their heads with rum.  
The gray dawn, bringing beauty to the skies,  
Saw Michael stretched among them, far too drunk to rise.

His footing paid, he joined the living-shed,  
Lined with rude bunks and set with trestles: there  
He, like the other ranchers, slept and fed,  
Save when the staff encamped in open air,  
Rounding the herd for branding. Rude and bare  
That barrack was; men littered it about  
With saddles, blankets blue, old headstalls, many a clout

Torn off to wipe a knife or clean a gun,  
Tin dishes, sailors' hookpots, all the mess  
Made where the outdoor work is never done  
And every cleaning makes the sleeping less.  
Men came from work too tired to undress,  
And slept all standing like the trooper's horse;  
Then with the sun they rose to ride the burning course.

Whacking the shipment cattle into pen,  
Where, in the dust, among the stink of burning,  
The half-mad heifers bolted from the men,  
And tossing horns arose and hoofs were churning,  
A lover there had little time for yearning;  
But all day long, cursing the flies and heat,  
Michael was handling steers on horseback till his feet



Gave on dismounting. All day long he rode,  
Then, when the darkness came, his mates and he  
Entered dog-tired to the rude abode  
And ate their meat and sucked their bitter tea,  
And rolled themselves in rugs and slept. The sea  
Could not make men more drowsy; like the dead,  
They lay under the lamp while the mosquitos fed.

There was no time to think of Mary, none;  
For when the work relaxed, the time for thought  
Was broken up by men demanding fun:  
Cards, or a well kept ring while someone fought,  
Or songs and dancing; or a case was bought  
Of white Brazilian rum, and songs and cheers  
And shots and oaths rang loud upon the twitching ears

Of the hobbled horses hopping to their feed,  
So violent images displaced the rose  
In Michael's spirit; soon he took the lead;  
None was more apt than he for games or blows.  
Even as the battle-seeking bantam crows,  
So crowed the cockerel of his mind to feel  
Life's bonds removed and blood quick in him toe to heel.

But sometimes when her letters came to him,  
Full of wise tenderness and maiden mind,  
He felt that he had let his clearness dim;  
The riot with the cowboys seemed unkind  
To that far faithful heart; he could not find  
Peace in the thought of her; he found no spur  
To instant upright action in his love for her.

She faded to the memory of a kiss,  
There in the rough life among foreign faces;  
Love cannot live where leisure never is;  
He could not write to her from savage places,  
Where drunken mates were betting on the aces,  
And rum went round and smutty songs were lifted.  
He would not raise her banner against that; he drifted,

Ceasing, in time, to write, ceasing to think,  
 But happy in the wild life to the bone;  
 The riding in vast space, the songs, the drink,  
 Some careless heart beside him like his own,  
 The racing and the fights, the ease unknown  
 In older, soberer lands; his young blood thrilled.  
 The pampas seemed his own, his cup of joy was filled.

And one day, riding far after strayed horses,  
 He rode beyond the ranges to a land  
 Broken and made most green by watercourses,  
 Which served as strayline to the neighbouring brand.  
 A house stood near the brook; he stayed his hand,  
 Seeing a woman there, whose great eyes burned,  
 So that he could not choose but follow when she turned.

After that day he often rode to see  
 That woman at the peach farm near the brook,  
 And passionate love between them came to be  
 Ere many days. Their fill of love they took;  
 And even as the blank leaves of a book  
 The days went over Mary, day by day,  
 Blank as the last, was turned, endured, passed, turned away.

Spring came again greening the hawthorn buds;  
 The shal<sup>l</sup> flowers, new-blossomed, seemed the same,  
 And April her riot in young bloods;  
 The jay<sup>bed</sup> h<sup>ed</sup> in the larch clump like blue flame.  
 She di<sup>g</sup> the d<sup>re</sup>; his letter never came.  
 Silent<sup>ry</sup> minut <sup>nursing</sup> the grief that kills,  
 And I<sup>rawled</sup> ac<sup>ed</sup> her pass among the daffodils.  
 till remain  
 I come to cl  
 while there v

## IV

Time with its dead<sup>till</sup> no letter came; she ceased,  
 Alas, rooms, and out never to expect.  
 The memories of time which had beheld love's feast,  
 The absence made her; the meadow-grass was flecked  
 With love, be quick," which died; little she recked  
 One when the three yd things, she did not change;  
 He bitter, wanting yoo<sup>ne</sup> star, one hope, it did not range,

Like to the watery hearts of tidal men,  
Swayed by all moons of beauty; she was firm,  
When most convinced of misery firmest then.  
She held a light not subject to the worm.  
The pageant of the summer ran its term,  
The last stack came to staddle from the wain;  
The snow fell, the snow thawed, the year began again

With the wet glistening gold of celandines,  
And snowdrops pushing from the withered grass,  
Before the bud upon the hawthorn greens,  
Or blackbirds go to building; but, alas!  
No spring within her bosom came to pass.  
"You're going like a ghost," her father said;  
"Now put him out of mind, and be my prudent maid."

It was an April morning brisk with wind,  
She wandered out along the brook sick-hearted,  
Picking the daffodils where the water dinned,  
While overhead the first-come swallow darted.  
There, at the place where all the passion started,  
Where love first knocked about her maiden heart,  
Young Lion Occleve hailed her, calling her apart

To see his tulips at The Roughs, and take  
A spray of flowering currant; so she went.  
It is a bitter moment, when hearts ache,  
To see the loved unhappy; his intent  
Was but to try to comfort her; he meant  
To show her that he knew her heart's despair,  
And that his own heart bled to see her wretched there.

So, as they talked, he asked her, had she heard  
From Michael lately? No, she had not; she  
Had been a great while now, without a word.  
"No news is always good news," answered he.  
"You know," he said, "how much you mean to me:  
You've always been the queen. Oh, if I could  
Do anything to help, my dear, you know I would."

"Nothing," she said, much touched. "But you believe—  
You still believe in him?" "Why, yes," he said.  
Lie though it was he did not dare deceive  
The all too cruel faith within the maid.  
"That ranching is a wild and lonely trade,  
Far from all posts; it may be hard to send;  
All puzzling things like this prove simple in the end.

"We should have heard if he were ill or dead.  
Keep a good heart. Now come"; he led the way  
Beyond the barton to the calving-shed,  
Where, on a strawy litter topped with hay,  
A double-pedigree prize bull-calf lay.  
"Near three weeks old," he said, "the Wrekin's pet,  
Come up, now, son, come up; you haven't seen him yet.

"We have done well," he added, "with the stock,  
But this one, if he lives, will make a name."  
The bull-calf gambolled with his tail acock,  
Then shyly nosed towards them, scared but tame;  
His troublous eyes were sulky with blue flame.  
Softly he tip-toed, shying at a touch;  
He nosed, his breath came sweet, his pale tongue curled to  
clutch.

They rubbed his head, and Mary went her way,  
Counting the dreary time, the dreary beat  
Of dreary minutes dragging through the day;  
Time crawled across her life with leaden feet;  
There still remained a year before her sweet  
Would come to claim her; surely he would come;  
Meanwhile there was the year, her weakening father, home.

Home with its deadly round, with all its setting,  
Things, rooms, and fields and flowers to sting, to burn  
With memories of the love time past forgetting  
Ere absence made her very being yearn.  
"My love, be quick," she moaned. "Return, return;  
Come when the three years end, oh, my dear soul,  
It's bitter, wanting you." The lonely nights took toll.

Putting a sadness where the beauty was,  
Taking a lustre from the hair; the days  
Saw each a sadder image in the glass.  
And when December came, fouling the ways,  
And ashless beech-logs made a Christmas blaze,  
Some talk of Michael came; a rumour ran,  
Someone had called him "wild" to some returning man,

Who, travelling through that cattle-range, had heard  
Nothing more sure than this; but this he told  
At second-hand upon a cowboy's word.  
It struck on Mary's heart and turned her cold.  
That winter was an age which made her old.  
"But soon," she thought, "soon the third year will end;  
March, April, May, and June, then I shall see my friend.

"He promised he would come; he will not fail.  
Oh, Michael, my beloved man, come soon;  
Stay not to make a home for me, but sail.  
Love and the hour will put the world in tune.  
You in my life for always is the boon  
I ask from life—we two, together, lovers."  
So leaden time went by who eats things and discovers.

Then, in the winds of March, her father rode,  
Hunting the Welland country on Black Ned;  
The tenor cry gave tongue past Clencher's Lode,  
And on he galloped, giving the nag his head;  
Then, at the brook, he fell, was picked up dead.  
Hounds were whipped off, men muttered with one breath,  
"We knew that hard-mouthed brute would some day be his  
death."

They bore his body on a hurdle home;  
Then came the burial, then the sadder day  
When the peaked lawyer entered like a gnome,  
With word to quit and lists of debts to pay.  
There was a sale; the Foxholes passed away  
To strangers, who discussed the points of cows,  
Where love had put such glory on the lovers' brows.

Kind Lion Occleve helped the maid's affairs.  
Her sorrow brought him much beside her; he  
Caused her to settle, having stilled her cares,  
In the long cottage under Spital Gree.  
He had no hope that she would love him; she  
Still waited for her lover, but her eyes  
Thanked Lion to the soul; he made the look suffice.

By this the yearling bull-calf had so grown  
That all men talked of him; mighty he grew,  
Huge-shouldered, scaled above a hundred stone,  
With deep chest many-wrinkled with great thew,  
Plain-loined and playful-eyed; the Occleves knew  
That he surpassed his pasture; breeders came  
From far to see this bull; he brought the Occleves fame.

Till a meat-breeding rancher on the plains  
Where Michael wasted, sent to buy the beast,  
Meaning to cross his cows with heavier strains  
Until his yield of meat and bone increased.  
He paid a mighty price; the yearling ceased  
To be the wonder of the countryside.  
He sailed in Lion's charge, south, to the Plate's red tide.

There Lion landed with the bull, and there  
The great beast raised his head and bellowed loud,  
Challenging that expanse and that new air;  
Trembling, but full of wrath and thunder-browed,  
Far from the daffodil fields and friends, but proud,  
His wild eye kindled at the great expanse.  
Two scraps of Shropshire life they stood there; their advance

Was slow along the well-grassed cattle land,  
But at the last an end was made; the brute  
Ate his last bread crust from his master's hand,  
And snuffed the foreign herd and stamped his foot;  
Steers on the swelling ranges gave salute.  
The great bull bellowed back and Lion turned;  
His task was now to find where Michael lived; he learned

The farm's direction, and with heavy mind,  
Thinking of Mary and her sorrow, rode,  
Leaving the offspring of his fields behind.  
A last time in his ears the great bull lowed.  
Then, shaking up his horse, the young man glowed  
To see the unfenced pampas opening out  
Grass that makes old earth sing and all the valleys shout.

At sunset on the second day he came  
To that white cabin in the peach-tree plot  
Where Michael lived; they met, the Shropshire name  
Rang trebly dear in that outlandish spot.  
Old memories swam up dear, old joys forgot,  
Old friends, were real again; but Mary's woe  
Came into Lion's mind, and Michael vexed him so.

Talking with careless freshness, side by side  
With that dark Spanish beauty who had won,  
As though no heart-broke woman, heavy-eyed,  
Mourned for him over sea, as though the sun  
Shone but to light his steps to love and fun,  
While she, that golden and beloved soul,  
Worth ten of him, lay wasting like an unlit coal.

So supper passed; the meat in Lion's gorge  
Stuck at the last, he could not bide that face.  
The idle laughter on it plied the forge  
Where hate was smithying tools; the jokes, the place,  
Wrought him to wrath; he could not stay for grace.  
The tin mug full of red wine spilled and fell.  
He kicked his stool aside with "Michael this is hell !

"Come out into the night and talk with me."  
The young man lit a cigarette and followed;  
The stars seemed trembling at a brink to see;  
A little ghostly white-owl stooped and holloed.  
Beside the stake-fence Lion stopped and swallowed,  
While all the wrath within him made him gray.  
Michael stood still and smoked, and flicked his ash away.

"Well, Lion," Michael said, "men make mistakes,  
And then regret them; and an early flame  
Is frequently the worst mistake man makes.  
I did not seek this passion, but it came.  
Love happens so in life. Well? Who's to blame?  
You'll say I've broken Mary's heart; the heart  
Is not the whole of life, but an inferior part,

"Useful for some few years and then a curse.  
Nerves should be stronger You have come to say  
The three-year term is up; so much the worse.  
I cannot meet the bill; I cannot pay.  
I would not if I could. Men change. To-day  
I know that that first choice, however sweet,  
Was wrong and a mistake; it would have meant defeat,

"Ruin and misery to us both. Let be.  
You say I should have told her this? Perhaps.  
You try to make a loving woman see  
That the warm link which holds you to her snaps.  
Neglect is deadlier than the thunder-claps.  
Yet she is bright and I am water. Well,  
I did not make myself; this life is often hell.

"Judge if you must, but understand it first.  
We are old friends, and townsmen, Shropshire born,  
Under the Wrekin. You believe the worst.  
You have no knowledge how the heart is torn,  
Trying for duty up against the thorn.  
Now say I've broken Mary's heart: begin.  
Break hers, or hers and mine, which were the greater sin?"

"Michael," said Lion, "I have heard you. Now  
Listen to me. Three years ago you made  
With a most noble soul a certain vow.  
Now you reject it, saying that you played.  
She did not think so, Michael, she has stayed,  
Eating her heart out for a line, a word,  
News that you were not dead; news that she never heard,



"Not once, after the first. She has held firm  
To what you counted pastime; she has wept  
Life, day by weary day throughout the term,  
While her heart sickened and the clock-hand crept.  
While you, you with your woman here, have kept  
Holiday, feasting; you are fat; you smile.  
You have had love and laughter all the ghastly while.

"I shall be back in England six weeks hence,  
Standing with your poor Mary face to face;  
Far from a pleasant moment, but intense.  
I shall be asked to tell her of this place.  
And she will eye me hard and hope for grace,  
Some little crumb of comfort while I tell,  
And every word will burn like a red spark from hell,

"That you have done with her, that you are living  
Here with another woman; that you care  
Nought for the pain you've given and are giving;  
That all your lover's vows were empty air.  
This I must tell: thus I shall burn her bare,  
Burn out all hope, all comfort, every crumb,  
End it, and watch her whiten, hopeless, tearless, dumb.

"Or do I judge you wrongly?" He was still.  
The cigarette-end glowed and dimmed with ash;  
A preying night bird whimpered on the hill.  
Michael said "Ah!" and fingered with his sash,  
Then stilled. The night was still; there came no flash  
Of sudden passion bursting. All was still;  
A lonely water gurgled like a whip-poor-will.

"Now I must go," said Lion; "where 's the horse?"  
"There," said his friend; "I'll set you on your way."  
They caught and rode, both silent, while remorse  
Worked in each heart, though neither would betray  
What he was feeling, and the moon came gray,  
Then burned into an opal white and great,  
Silvering the downs of grass where these two travelled late

Thinking of English fields which that moon saw,  
Fields full of quiet beauty lying hushed  
At midnight in the moment full of awe,  
When the red fox comes creeping, dewy-brushed.  
But neither spoke; they rode; the horses rushed,  
Scattering the great clods skywards with such thrills  
As colts in April feel there in the daffodils.

## V

THE river brimming full was silvered over  
By moonlight at the ford; the river bank  
Smelt of bruised clove buds and of yellow clover.  
Nosing the gleaming dark the horses drank,  
Drooping and dripping as the reins fell lank;  
The men drooped too; the stars in heaven drooped;  
Rank after hurrying rank the silver water trooped

In ceaseless bright procession past the shallows,  
Talking its quick inconsequence. The friends,  
Warmed by the gallop on the unfenced fallows,  
Felt it a kindlier thing to make amends.  
"A jolly burst," said Michael; "here it ends.  
Your way lies straight beyond the water. There.  
Watch for the lights, and keep those two stars as the bear."

Something august was quick in all that sky,  
Wheeling in multitudinous march with fire;  
The falling of the wind brought it more nigh,  
They felt the earth take solace and respire;  
The horses shifted foothold in the mire,  
Splashing and making eddies. Lion spoke:  
"Do you remember riding past the haunted oak

"That Christmas Eve, when all the bells were ringing,  
So that we picked out seven churches' bells,  
Ringing the night, and people carol-singing?  
It hummed and died away and rose in swells  
Like a sea breaking. We have been through hells  
Since then, we two, and now this being here  
Brings all that Christmas back, and makes it strangely near."

"Yes," Michael answered, "they were happy times  
Riding beyond there; but a man needs change;  
I know what they connote, those Christmas chimes,  
Fudge in the heart, and pudding in the grange.  
It stifles me all that; I need the range,  
Like this before us, open to the sky;  
There every wing is clipped, but here a man can fly."

"Ah," said his friend, "man only flies in youth,  
A few short years at most, until he finds  
That even quiet is a form of truth,  
And all the rest a coloured rag that blinds.  
Life offers nothing but contented minds.  
Some day you'll know it, Michael. I am grieved  
That Mary's heart will pay until I am believed."

There was a silence while the water dripped  
From the raised muzzles champing on the steel.  
Flogging the crannied banks the water lipped.  
Night up above them turned her starry wheel;  
And each man feared to let the other feel  
How much he felt; they fenced; they put up bars.  
The moon made heaven pale among the withering stars.

"Michael," said Lion, "why should we two part?  
Ride on with me; or shall we both return,  
Make preparation, and to-morrow start,  
And travel home together? You would learn  
How much the people long to see you; turn.  
We will ride back and say good-bye, and then  
Sail, and see home again, and see the Shropshire men,

"And see the old Shropshire mountain and the fair,  
Full of drunk Welshmen bringing mountain ewes;  
And partridge shooting would be starting there."  
Michael hung down his head and seemed to choose.  
The horses churned fresh footing in the ooze.  
Then Michael asked if Tom were still alive,  
Old Tom, who fought the Welshman under Upton Drive,

For nineteen rounds, on grass, with the bare hands?  
"Shaky," said Lion, "living still, but weak;  
Almost past speaking, but he understands."  
"And old Shon Shones we teased so with the leek?"  
"Dead." "When?" "December." Michael did not speak,  
But muttered "Old Jones dead." A minute passed.  
"What came to little Sue, his girl," he said at last.

"Got into trouble with a man and died;  
Her sister keeps the child." His hearer stirred.  
"Dead, too? She was a pretty girl," he sighed,  
"A graceful pretty creature, like a bird.  
What is the child?" "A boy. Her sister heard  
Too late to help; poor Susan died; the man  
None knew who he could be, but many rumours ran."

"Ah," Michael said. The horses tossed their heads;  
A little wind arising struck in chill;  
"Time," he began, "that we were in our beds."  
A distant heifer challenged from the hill,  
Scraped at the earth with 's forefoot and was still.  
"Come with me," Lion pleaded. Michael grinned;  
He turned his splashing horse, and prophesied a wind.

"So long," he said, and "Kind of you to call.  
Straight on, and watch the stars"; his horse's feet  
Trampled the firmer foothold, ending all.  
He flung behind no message to his sweet,  
No other word to Lion; the dull beat  
Of his horse's trample drummed upon the trail;  
Lion could watch him drooping in the moonlight pale,

Drooping and lessening; half expectant still  
That he would turn and greet him; but no sound  
Came, save the lonely water's whip-poor-will  
And the going horse hoofs dying on the ground.  
"Michael," he cried, "Michael!" A lonely mound  
Beyond the water gave him back the cry.  
"That 's at an end," he said, "and I have failed her—I."

Soon the far hoof-beats died, save for a stir  
Half heard, then lost, then still, then heard again.  
A quickening rhythm showed he plied the spur.  
Then a vast breathing silence took the plain.  
The moon was like a soul within the brain  
Of the great sleeping world; silent she rode.  
'The water talked, talked, talked: it trembled as it flowed.

A moment Lion thought to ride in chase.  
He turned, then turned again, knowing his friend.  
He forded through with death upon his face,  
And rode the plain that seemed never to end.  
Clumps of pale cattle nosed the thing unkennd,  
Riding the night; out of the night they rose,  
Snuffing with outstretched heads, stamping with surly lows,

Till he was threading through a crowd, a sea  
Of curious shorthorns backing as he came,  
Barring his path, but shifting warily;  
He slapped the hairy flanks of the more tame.  
Unreal the ghostly cattle lumbered lame.  
His horse kept at an even pace; the cows  
Broke right and left like waves before advancing bows.

Lonely the pampas seemed amid that herd.  
The thought of Mary's sorrow pricked him sore;  
He brought no comfort for her, not a word;  
He would not ease her pain, but bring her more.  
The long miles dropped behind; lights rose before,  
Lights and the seaport and the briny air;  
And so he sailed for home to comfort Mary there.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Mary knew the worst she only sighed,  
Looked hard at Lion's face, and sat quite still,  
White to the lips, but stern and stony-eyed,  
Beaten by life in all things but the will.  
Though the blow struck her hard it did not kill.  
She rallied on herself, a new life bloomed  
Out of the ashy heart where Michael lay entombed.

And more than this: for Lion touched a sense  
That he, the honest humdrum man, was more  
Than he by whom the glory and the offence  
Came to her life three bitter years before.  
This was a treason in her being's core;  
It smouldered there; meanwhile as two good friends  
They met at autumn dusks and winter daylight-ends.

And once, after long twilight talk, he broke  
His strong restraint upon his passion for her,  
And burningly, most like a man he spoke,  
Until her pity almost overbore her.  
It could not be, she said; her pity tore her;  
But still it could not be, though this was pain.  
Then on a frosty night they met and spoke again.

And then he wooed again, clutching her hands,  
Calling the maid his mind, his heart, his soul,  
Saying that God had linked their lives in bands  
When the worm Life first started from the goal;  
That they were linked together, past control,  
Linked from all time, could she but pity; she  
Pitied him from the soul, but said it could not be.

"Mary," he asked, "you cannot love me? No?"  
"No," she replied; "would God I could, my dear."  
"God bless you then," he answered, "I must go,  
Go over sea and get away from here,  
I cannot think of work when you are near;  
My whole life falls to pieces; it must end.  
This meeting now must be 'good-bye,' beloved friend."

White-lipped she listened, then with failing breath,  
She asked for yet a little time; her face  
Was even as that of one condemned to death.  
She asked for yet another three months' grace,  
Asked it, as Lion inly knew, in case  
Michael should still return; and "Yes," said he,  
"I'll wait three months for you, beloved; let it be."

Slowly the three months dragged: no Michael came.  
March brought the daffodils and set them shaking.  
April was quick in Nature like green flame;  
May came with dog-rose buds, and corncrakes craking,  
Then dwindled like her blossom; June was breaking.  
"Mary," said Lion, "can you answer now?"  
White like a ghost she stood, he long remembered how.

Wild-eyed and white, and trembling like a leaf,  
She gave her answer, "Yes"; she gave her lips,  
Cold as a corpse's to the kiss of grief,  
Shuddering away as if his touch were whips.  
Then her best nature, struggling to eclipse  
This shrinking self, made speech; she jested there;  
They searched each other's eyes, and both souls saw despair.

So the first passed, and after that began  
A happier time: she could not choose but praise  
That recognition of her in the man  
Striving to salve her pride in myriad ways;  
He was a gentle lover: gentle days  
Passed like a music after tragic scenes;  
Her heart gave thanks for that; but still the might-have-beens

Haunted her inner spirit day and night,  
And often in his kiss the memory came  
Of Michael's face above her, passionate, white,  
His lips at her lips murmuring her name.  
Then she would suffer sleepless, sick with shame,  
And struggle with her weakness. She had vowed  
To give herself to Lion; she was true and proud.

He should not have a woman sick with ghosts,  
But one firm-minded to be his; so time  
Passed one by one the summer's marking posts,  
The dog-rose and the foxglove and the lime.  
Then on a day the church-bells rang a chime.  
Men fired the bells till all the valley filled  
With bell-noise from the belfry where the jackdaws build.

Lion and she were married; home they went,  
Home to The Roughts as man and wife; the news  
Was printed in the paper. Mary sent  
A copy out to Michael. Now we lose  
Sight of her for a time, and the great dews  
Fall, and the harvest-moon grows red and fills  
Over the barren fields where March brings daffodils.

## VI

THE rider lingered at the fence a moment,  
Tossed out the pack to Michael, whistling low,  
Then rode, waving his hand, without more comment,  
Down the vast gray-green pampas sloping slow.  
Michael's last news had come so long ago,  
He wondered who had written now; the hand  
Thrilled him with vague alarm, it brought him to a stand.

He opened it with one eye on the hut,  
Lest she within were watching him, but she  
Was combing out her hair, the door was shut,  
The green sun-shutters closed, she could not see.  
Out fell the love-tryst handkerchief which he  
Had had embroidered with his name for her;  
It had been dearly kept, it smelt of lavender.

Something remained: a paper, crossed with blue,  
Where he should read; he stood there in the sun,  
Reading of Mary's wedding till he knew  
What he had cast away, what he had done.  
He was rejected, Lion was the one.  
Lion, the godly and the upright, he.  
The black lines in the paper showed how it could be.

He pocketed the love gift and took horse  
And rode out to the pay-shed for his savings.  
Then turned, and rode a lonely water-course,  
Alone with bitter thoughts and bitter cravings.  
Sun-shadows on the reeds made twinkling wavings;  
An orange-bellied turtle scooped the mud;  
Mary had married Lion, and the news drew blood.



And with the bitterness, the outcast felt  
A passion for those old kind Shropshire places,  
The ruined chancel where the nuns had knelt;  
High Ercall and the Chase End and the Chases,  
The glimmering mere, the burr, the well-known faces  
By Wrekin and by Zine and country town.  
The orange-bellied turtle burrowed further down.

He could remember Mary now; her crying  
Night after night alone through weary years,  
Had touched him now and set the cords replying;  
He knew her misery now, her ache, her tears,  
The lonely nights, the ceaseless hope, the fears,  
The arm stretched out for one not there, the slow  
Loss of the lover's faith, the letting comfort go.

"Now I will ride," he said. Beyond the ford  
He caught a fresh horse and rode on. The night  
Found him a guest at Pepe Blanco's board,  
Moody and drinking rum and ripe for fight;  
Drawing his gun, he shot away the light,  
And parried Pepe's knife and caught his horse,  
And all night long he rode bedevilled by remorse.

At dawn he caught an eastward-going ferry,  
And all day long he steamed between great banks  
Which smelt of yellow thorn and loganberry.  
Then wharves appeared, and chimneys rose in ranks,  
Mast upon mast arose; the river's flanks  
Were filled with English ships, and one he found  
Needing another stoker, being homeward bound.

And all the time the trouble in his head  
Ran like a whirlwind moving him; he knew  
Since she was lost that he was better dead.  
He had no project outlined, what to do,  
Beyond go home; he joined the steamer's crew.  
She sailed that night: he dulled his maddened soul,  
Plying the iron coal-slice on the bunker coal.

Work did not clear the turmoil in his mind;  
Passion takes colour from the nature's core;  
His misery was as his nature, blind.  
Life was still turmoil when he went ashore.  
To see his old love married lay before;  
To see another have her, drink the gall,  
Kicked like a dog without, while he within had all.

\* \* \* \* \*

Soon he was at the Foxholes, at the place  
Whither, from over sea, his heart had turned  
Often at evening-ends in times of grace.  
But little outward change his eye discerned;  
A red rose at her bedroom window burned,  
Just as before. Even as of old the wasps  
Poised at the yellow plums; the gate creaked on its hasps

And the white fantails sidled on the roof  
Just as before; their pink feet, even as of old,  
Printed the frosty morning's rime with proof.  
Still the zew-tallat's thatch was green with mould;  
The apples on the withered boughs were gold.  
Men and the times were changed: "And I," said he,  
"Will go and not return, since she is not for me.

"I'll go, for it would be a scurvy thing  
To spoil her marriage, and besides, she cares  
For that half-priest she married with the ring.  
Small joy for me in seeing how she wears,  
Or seeing what he takes and what she shares.  
That beauty and those ways: she had such ways,  
There in the daffodils in those old April days."

So with an impulse of good will he turned,  
Leaving that place of daffodils; the road  
Was paven sharp with memories which burned;  
He trod them strongly under as he strode.  
At the Green Turning's forge the furnace glowed;  
Red dithying sparks flew from the trampled soft  
Fold from the fire's heart; down clanged the hammers oft.

That was a bitter place to pass, for there  
 Mary and he had often, often stayed  
 To watch the horseshoe growing in the glare.  
 It was a tryst in childhood when they strayed.  
 There was a stile beside the forge; he laid  
 His elbows on it, leaning, looking down  
 The river-valley stretched with great trees turning brown.

Infinite, too, because it reached the sky,  
 And distant spires arose and distant smoke;  
 The whiteness on the blue went stilly by;  
 Only the clinking forge the stillness broke.  
 Ryemeadows brook was there; The Roughs, the oak  
 Where the White Woman walked; the black firs showed  
 Around the Occleve homestead, Mary's new abode.

A long, long time he gazed at that fair place,  
 So well remembered from of old; he sighed.  
 "I will go down and look upon her face,  
 See her again, whatever may betide.  
 Hell is my future; I shall soon have died,  
 But I will take to hell one memory more;  
 She shall not see nor know; I shall be gone before;

"Before they turn the dogs upon me, even.  
 I do not mean to speak; but only see.  
 Even the devil gets a peep at heaven;  
 One peep at her shall come to hell with me;  
 One peep at her, no matter what may be."  
 He crossed the stile and hurried down the slope.  
 Remembered trees and hedges gave a zest to hope.

\* \* \* \* \*

A low brick wall with privet shrubs beyond  
 Ringed in The Roughs upon the side he neared.  
 Eastward some bramble bushes cloaked the pond;  
 Westward was barley-stubble not yet cleared.  
 He thrust aside the privet boughs and peered.  
 The drooping fir trees let their darkness trail  
 Black like a pirate's masts bound under easy sail.

The garden with its autumn flowers was there;  
 Few that his wayward memory linked with her.  
 Summer had burnt the summer flowers bare,  
 But honey-hunting bees still made a stir.  
 Sprigs were still bluish on the lavender,  
 And bluish daisies budded, bright flies poised;  
 The wren upon the tree-stump carolled cheery-voiced.

He could not see her there. Windows were wide,  
 Late wasps were cruising, and the curtains shook.  
 Smoke, like the house's breathing, floated, sighed;  
 Among the trembling firs strange ways it took.  
 But still no Mary's presence blessed his look;  
 The house was still as if deserted, hushed.  
 Faint fragrance hung about it as if herbs were crushed.

Fragrance that gave his memory's guard a hint  
 Of times long past, of reapers in the corn,  
 Bruising with heavy boots the stalks of mint,  
 When first the berry reddens on the thorn.  
 Memories of her that fragrance brought. Forlorn  
 That vigil of the watching outcast grew;  
 He crept towards the kitchen, sheltered by a yew.

The windows of the kitchen opened wide.  
 Again the fragrance came; a woman spoke;  
 Old Mrs. Occleve talked to one inside.  
 A smell of cooking filled a gust of smoke.  
 Then fragrance once again, for herbs were broke;  
 Pourri was being made; the listener heard  
 Things lifted and laid down, bruised into sweetness, stirred.

While an old woman made remarks to one  
 Who was not the beloved: Michael learned  
 That Roger's wife at Upton had a son,  
 And that the red geraniums should be turned;  
 A hen was missing, and a rick was burned;  
 Our Lord commanded patience; here' it broke;  
 The window closed, it made the kitchen chimney smoke.

Steps clacked on flagstones to the outer door;  
A dairymaid, whom he remembered well,  
Lined, now, with age, and grayer than before,  
Rang a cracked cow-bell for the dinner-bell.  
He saw the dining-room; he could not tell  
If Mary were within: inly he knew  
That she was coming now, that she would be in blue.

Blue with a silver locket at the throat,  
And that she would be there, within there, near,  
With the little blushes that he knew by rote,  
And the gray eyes so steadfast and so dear,  
The voice, pure like the nature, true and clear,  
Speaking to her belov'd within the room.  
The gate clicked, Lion came: the outcast hugged the gloom,

Watching intently from below the boughs,  
While Lion cleared his riding-boots of clay,  
Eyed the high clouds and went within the house.  
His eyes looked troubled, and his hair looked gray.  
Dinner began within with much to say.  
Old Occleve roared aloud at his own joke.  
Mary, it seemed, was gone; the loved voice never spoke.

Nor could her lover see her from the yew;  
She was not there at table; she was ill,  
Ill, or away perhaps—he wished he knew.  
Away, perhaps, for Occleve bellowed still.  
“If sick,” he thought, “the maid or Lion will  
Take food to her.” He watched; the dinner ended.  
The staircase was not used; none climbed it, none descended.

“Not here,” he thought; but wishing to be sure,  
He waited till the Occleves went to field,  
Then followed, round the house, another lure,  
Using the well-known privet as his shield.  
He meant to run a risk; his heart was steeled.  
He knew of old which bedroom would be hers;  
He crouched upon the north front in among the firs.

The house stared at him with its red-brick blank,  
Its vacant window-eyes; its open door,  
With old wrought bridle ring-hooks at each flank,  
Swayed on a creaking hinge as the wind bore:  
Nothing had changed; the house was as before,  
The dull red brick, the windows sealed or wide:  
"I will go in," he said. He rose and stepped inside.

None could have seen him coming; all was still;  
He listened in the doorway for a sign.  
Above, a rafter creaked, a stir, a thrill  
Moved, till the frames clacked on the picture line.  
"Old Mother Occleve sleeps, the servants dine,"  
He muttered, listening. "Hush." A silence brooded.  
Far off the kitchen dinner clattered; he intruded.

Still, to his right, the best room door was locked.  
Another door was at his left; he stayed.  
Within, a stately timepiece ticked and tocked  
To one who slumbered breathing deep; it made  
An image of Time's going and man's trade.  
He looked: Old Mother Occleve lay asleep,  
Hands crossed upon her knitting, rosy, breathing deep.

He tiptoed up the stairs which creaked and cracked.  
The landing creaked; the shut doors, painted gray,  
Loomed, as if shutting in some dreadful act.  
The nodding frames seemed ready to betray.  
The east room had been closed in Michael's day,  
Being the best; but now he guessed it hers;  
The fields of daffodils lay next it, past the firs.

Just as he reached the landing, Lion cried,  
Somewhere below, "I'll get it." Lion's feet  
Struck on the flagstones with a hasty stride,  
"He's coming up," thought Michael, "we shall meet,"  
He snatched the nearest door for his retreat,  
Opened with thieves' swift silence; dared not close,  
But stood within, behind it. Lion's footsteps rose,

Running two steps at once, while Michael stood,  
Not breathing, only knowing that the room  
Was someone's bedroom smelling of old wood,  
Hung with engravings of the day of doom.  
The footsteps stopped; and Lion called, to whom?  
A gentle question, tapping at a door,  
And Michael shifted feet, and creakings took the floor.

The footsteps recommenced, a door-catch clacked;  
Within an eastern room the footsteps passed.  
Drawers were pulled loudly open and ransacked,  
Chattels were thrust aside and overcast.  
What could the thing be that he sought? At last  
His voice said, "Here it is." The wormed floor  
Creaked with returning footsteps down the corridor.loom,

The footsteps came as though the walker read,  
Or added rows of figures by the way;  
There was much hesitation in the tread;  
Lion seemed pondering which, to go or stay;  
Then, seeing the door, which covered Michael, sway,  
He swiftly crossed and shut it. "Always one  
For order," Michael muttered; "Now be swift, my son."

The action seemed to break the walker's mood;  
The footsteps passed downstairs, along the hall,  
Out at the door and off towards the wood.  
"Gone," Michael muttered. "Now to hazard all."  
Outside, the frames still nodded on the wall.  
Michael stepped swiftly up the floor to try  
The door where Lion tapped and waited for reply.

It was the eastmost of the rooms which look  
Over the fields of daffodils; the bound  
Scanned from its windows is Ryemeadows brook,  
Banked by gnarled apple trees and rising ground.  
Most gently Michael tapped; he heard no sound,  
Only the blind-pull tapping with the wind;  
The kitchen-door was opened: kitchen-clatter dinned.

A woman walked along the hall below,  
Humming; a maid, he judged; the footsteps died,  
Listening intently still, he heard them go,  
Then swiftly turned the knob and went inside.  
The blind-pull at the window volleyed wide;  
The curtains streamed out like a waterfall;  
The pictures of the fox-hunt clacked along the wall.

No one was there; no one; the room was hers.  
A book of praise lay open on the bed;  
The clothes-press smelt of many lavenders,  
Her spirit stamped the room; herself was fled.  
Here she found peace of soul like daily bread,  
Here, with her lover Lion; Michael gazed;  
He would have been the sharer had he not been crazed.

He took the love-gift handkerchief again;  
He laid it on her table, near the glass,  
So opened that the brodered name was plain;  
"Plain," he exclaimed, "she cannot let it pass.  
It stands and speaks for me as bold as brass.  
My answer, my heart's cry, to tell her this,  
That she is still my darling: all she was she is.

"So she will know at least that she was wrong,  
That underneath the blindness I was true.  
Fate is the strongest thing, though men are strong;  
Out from beyond life I was sealed to you.  
But my blind ways destroyed the cords that drew;  
And now, the evil done, I know my need;  
Fate has his way with those who mar what is decreed.

"And now, good-bye." He closed the door behind him,  
Then stept, with firm swift footstep down the stair,  
Meaning to go where she would never find him;  
He would go down through darkness to despair.  
Out at the door he stept; the autumn air  
Came fresh upon his face; none saw him go.  
"Good-bye, my love," he muttered; "it is better so."



Soon he was on the high road, out of sight  
Of valley and farm; soon he could see no more  
The oast-house pointing finger take the light  
As tumbling pigeons glittered over; nor  
Could he behold the wind-vane gilded o'er,  
Swinging above the church; the road swung round.  
"Now, the last look," he cried: he saw that holy ground.

"Good-bye," he cried; he could behold it all,  
Spread out as in a picture; but so clear  
That the gold apple stood out from the wall;  
Like a red jewel stood the grazing steer.  
Precise, intensely coloured, all brought near,  
As in a vision, lay that holy ground.  
"Mary is there," he moaned, "and I am outward bound.

"I never saw this place so beautiful,  
Never like this. I never saw it glow.  
Spirit is on this place; it fills it full.  
So let the die be cast; I will not go.  
But I will see her face to face and know  
From her own lips what thoughts she has of me;  
And if disaster come: right; let disaster be."

Back, by another way, he turned. The sun  
Fired the yew-tops in the Roman woods.  
Lights in the valley twinkled one by one,  
The starlings whirled in dropping multitudes.  
Dusk fingered into one earth's many moods,  
Back to The Roughts he walked; he neared the brook;  
A lamp burned in the farm; he saw; his fingers shook.

He had to cross the brook, to cross a field  
Where daffodils were thick when years were young.  
Then, were she there, his fortunes should be sealed.  
Down the mud trackway to the brook he swung;  
Then while the passion trembled on his tongue,  
Dim, by the dim bridge-stile, he seemed to see  
A figure standing mute; a woman—it was she.

She stood quite stilly, waiting for him there.  
She did not seem surprised; the meeting seemed  
Planned from all time by powers in the air  
To change their human fates; he even deemed  
That in another life this thing had gleamed,  
This meeting by the bridge. He said, "It's you."  
"Yes, I," she said, "who else? You must have known; you  
knew

"That I should come here to the brook to see,  
After your message." "You were out," he said.  
"Gone, and I did not know where you could be.  
Where were you, Mary, when the thing was laid?"  
"Old Mrs. Cale is dying, and I stayed  
Longer than usual, while I read the Word.  
You could have hardly gone." She paused, her bosom stirred.

"Mary, I sinned," he said. "Not that, dear, no."  
She said; "but, oh, you were unkind, unkind,  
Never to write a word and leave me so,  
But out of sight with you is out of mind."  
"Mary, I sinned," he said, "and I was blind.  
Oh, my beloved, are you Lion's wife?"  
"Belov'd sounds strange," she answered, "in my present life.

"But it is sweet to hear it, all the same.  
It is a language little heard by me  
Alone, in that man's keeping, with my shame.  
I never thought such miseries could be.  
I was so happy in you, Michael. He  
Came when I felt you changed from what I thought you.  
Even now it is not love, but jealousy that brought you."

"That is untrue," he said. "I am in hell.  
You are my heart's beloved, Mary, you.  
By God, I know your beauty now too well.  
We are each other's, flesh and soul, we two."  
"That was sweet knowledge once," she said; "we knew  
That truth of old. Now, in a strange man's bed,  
I read it in my soul, and find it written red."

"Is he a brute?" he asked. "No," she replied.  
 "I did not understand what it would mean.  
 And now that you are back, would I had died;  
 Died, and the misery of it not have been.  
 Lion would not be wrecked, nor I unclean.  
 I was a proud one once, and now I'm tame;  
 Oh, Michael, say some word to take away my shame."

She sobbed; his arms went round her; the night heard  
 Intense fierce whispering passing, soul to soul,  
 Love running hot on many a murmured word,  
 Love's passionate giving into new control.  
 Their present misery did but blow the coal,  
 Did but entangle deeper their two wills,  
 While the brown brook ran on by buried daffodils.

## VII

Upon a light gust came a waft of bells,  
 Ringing the chimes for nine; a broken sweet,  
 Like waters bubbling out of hidden wells,  
 Dully upon those lovers' ears it beat,  
 Their time was at an end. Her tottering feet  
 Trod the dim field for home; he sought an inn.  
 "Oh, I have sinned," she cried, "but not a secret sin."

Inside The Roughts they waited for her coming;  
 Eyeing the ticking clock the household sat.  
 "Nine," the clock struck; the clock-weights ran down  
 drumming.  
 Old Mother Occleve stretched her sewing flat.  
 "It's nine," she said. Old Occleve stroked the cat.  
 "Ah, cat," he said, "hast had good go at mouse?"  
 Lion sat listening tense to all within the house.

"Mary is late to-night," the gammer said.  
 "The times have changed," her merry husband roared;  
 "Young married couples now like lonely trade,  
 Don't think of bed at all, they think of board.  
 No multiplying left in people. Lord!  
 When I was Lion's age I'd had my five.  
 There was some go in folk when us two took to wive."

Lion arose and stalked and bit his lip.  
"Or was it six?" the old man muttered, "six.  
Us had so many I've alost the tip.  
Us were two right good souls at getting chicks.  
Two births of twins, then Johnny's birth, then Dick's" . . .  
"Now give a young man time," the mother cried.  
Mary came swiftly in and flung the room door wide.

Lion was by the window when she came,  
Old Occleve and his wife were by the fire;  
Big shadows leapt the ceiling from the flame.  
She fronted the three figures and came nigher.  
"Lion," she whispered, "I return my hire."  
She dropped her marriage-ring upon the table.  
Then, in a louder voice, "I bore what I was able,

"And Time and marriage might have worn me down,  
Perhaps, to be a good wife and a blest,  
With little children clinging to my gown,  
And little blind mouths fumbling for my breast,  
And this place would have been a place of rest  
For you and me; we could have come to know  
The depth; but that is over; I have got to go.

"He has come back, and I have got to go.  
Our marriage ends." She stood there white and breathed.  
Old Occleve got upon his feet with "So."  
Blazing with wrath upon the hearth he seethed.  
A log fell from the bars; blue spirals wreathed  
Across the still old woman's startled face;  
The cat arose and yawned. Lion was still a space.

Old Occleve turned to Lion. Lion moved  
Nearer to Mary, picking up the ring.  
His was grim physic from the soul beloved;  
His face was white and twitching with the sting.  
"You are my wife, you cannot do this thing,"  
He said at last. "I can respect your pride.  
This thing affects your soul; my judgment must decide.

"You are unsettled, shaken from the shock."  
"Not so," she said. She stretched a hand to him,  
White, large and noble, steady as a rock,  
Cunning with many powers, curving, slim.  
The smoke, drawn by the door-draught, made it dim.  
"Right," Lion answered. "You are steady. Then  
There is but one world, Mary; this, the world of men.

"And there 's another world, without its bounds,  
Peopled by streaked and spotted souls who prize  
The flashiness that comes from marshy grounds  
Above plain daylight. In their blinkered eyes  
Nothing is bright but sentimental lies,  
Such as are offered you, dear, here and now;  
Lies which betray the strongest, God alone knows how.

"You, in your beauty and your whiteness, turn  
Your strong, white mind, your faith, your fearless truth  
All for these rotten fires that so burn.  
A sentimental clutch at perished youth.  
I am too sick for wisdom, sick with ruth,  
And this comes suddenly; the unripe man  
Misses the hour, oh God. But you, what is your plan?

"What do you mean to do, how act, how live?  
What warrant have you for your life? What trust?  
You are for going sailing in a sieve.  
This brightness is too mortal not to rust.  
So our beginning marriage ends in dust.  
I have not failed you, Mary. Let me know  
What you intend to do, and whither you will go."

"Go from this place; it chokes me," she replied.  
"This place has branded me; I must regain  
My truth that I have soiled, my faith, my pride,  
It is all poison and it leaves a stain.  
I cannot stay nor be your wife again.  
Never. You did your best, though; you were kind.  
I have grown old to-night and left all that behind.

"Good-bye." She turned. Old Occleve faced his son.  
Wrath at the woman's impudence was blent,  
Upon his face, with wrath that such an one  
Should stand unthrashed until her words were spent.  
He stayed for Lion's wrath; but Mary went  
Unchecked; he did not stir. Her footsteps ground  
The gravel to the gate; the gate-hinge made a sound

Like to a cry of pain after a shot.  
Swinging, it clicked, it clicked again, it swung  
Until the iron latch bar hit the slot.  
Mary had gone, and Lion held his tongue.  
Old Mother Occleve sobbed; her white head hung  
Over her sewing while the tears ran down  
Her worn, blood-threaded cheeks and splashed upon her  
gown.

"Yes, it is true," said Lion, "she must go.  
Michael is back. Michael was always first,  
I did but take his place. You did not know.  
Now it has happened, and you know the worst.  
So passion makes the passionate soul accurst  
And crucifies his darling. Michael comes  
And the savage truth appears and rips my life to thrums."

Upon Old Occleve's face the fury changed  
First to contempt, and then to terror lest  
Lion, beneath the shock, should be deranged.  
But Lion's eyes were steady, though distressed.  
"Father, good-night," he said, "I'm going to rest.  
Good-night, I cannot talk. Mother, good-night."  
He kissed her brow and went; they heard him strike a light,

And go with slow depressed step up the stairs,  
Up to the door of her deserted bower;  
They heard him up above them, moving chairs;  
The memory of his paleness made them cower.  
They did not know their son; they had no power  
To help, they only saw the new-won bride  
Defy their child, and faith and custom put aside.

After a time men learned where Mary was:  
Over the hills, not many miles away,  
Renting a cottage and a patch of grass  
Where Michael came to see her. Every day  
Taught her what fevers can inhabit clay,  
Shaking this body that so soon must die.  
The time made Lion old: the winter dwindled by.

Till the long misery had to end or kill:  
And "I must go to see her," Lion cried;  
"I am her standby, and she needs me still;  
If not to love she needs me to decide.  
Dear, I will set you free. Oh, my bright bride,  
Lost in such piteous ways, come back." He rode  
Over the wintry hills to Mary's new abode.

And as he topped the pass between the hills,  
Towards him, up the swerving road, there came  
Michael, the happy cause of all his ills;  
Walking as though repentance were the shame,  
Sucking a grass, unbuttoned, still the same,  
Humming a tune; his careless beauty wild  
Drawing the women's eyes; he wandered with a child

Who heard, wide-eyed, the scraps of tales which fell  
Between the fragments of the tune; they seemed  
A cherub bringing up a soul from hell.  
Meeting unlike the meeting long since dreamed.  
Lion dismounted; the great valley gleamed  
With waters far below; his teeth were set,  
His heart thumped at his throat; he stopped; the two men  
met.

The child well knew that fatal issues joined;  
He stood round-eyed to watch them, even as Fate  
Stood with his pennypiece of causes coined  
Ready to throw for issue; the bright hate  
Throbbled, that the heavy reckoning need not wait.  
Lion stepped forward, watching Michael's eyes.  
"We are old friends," he said. "Now, Michael, you be wise,

"And let the harm already done suffice;  
Go, before Mary's name is wholly gone.  
Spare her the misery of desertion twice,  
There's only ruin in the road you're on—  
Ruin for both, whatever promise shone  
In sentimental shrinkings from the fact.  
So, Michael, play the man, and do the generous act

"And go; if not for my sake, go for hers.  
You only want her with your sentiment.  
You are water roughed by every wind that stirs,  
One little gust will alter your intent.  
All ways, to every wind, and nothing meant,  
Is your life's habit. Man, one takes a wife,  
Not for a three months' fancy, but the whole of life.

"We have been friends, and so I speak you fair.  
How will you bear her ill, or cross, or tired?  
Sentiment sighing will not help you there.  
You call a half life's volume not desired.  
I know your love for her. I saw it mired,  
Mired, past going, by your first sharp taste  
Of life and work; it stopped; you let her whole life waste,

"Rather than have the trouble of such love,  
You will again; but if you do it now,  
It will mean death, not sorrow. But enough.  
You know too well you cannot keep a vow.  
There are gray hairs already on her brow.  
You brought them there. Death is the next step. Go.  
Before you take the step. "No," Michael answered "No.

'As for my past, I was a dog, a cur,  
And I have paid blood-money, and still pay.  
But all my being is ablaze with her;  
There is no talk of giving up to-day.  
I will not give her up. You used to say  
Bodies are earth. I heard you say it. Liar!  
You never loved her, you. She turns the earth to fire."



"Michael," said Lion, "you have said such things  
Of other women; less than six miles hence  
You and another woman felt love's wings  
Rosy and fair, and so took leave of sense.  
She's dead, that other woman, dead, with pence  
Pressed on her big brown eyes, under the ground;  
She that was merry once, feeling the world go round.

"Her child (and yours) is with her sister now,  
Out there, behind us, living as they can;  
Pinched by the poverty that you allow.  
All a long autumn many rumours ran  
About Sue Jones that was: you were the man.  
The lad is like you. Think about his mother,  
Before you turn the earth to fire with another."

"That is enough," said Michael, "you shall know  
Soon, to your marrow, what my answer is;  
Know to your lying heart; now kindly go.  
The neighbours smell that something is amiss.  
We two will keep a dignity in this,  
Such as we can. No quarrelling with me here.  
Mary might see; now go; but recollect, my dear,

"That if you twit me with your wife, you lie;  
And that your further insult waits a day  
When God permits that Mary is not by;  
I keep the record of it, and shall pay.  
And as for Mary; listen: we betray  
No one. We keep our troth-plight as we meant.  
Now go, the neighbours gather." Lion bowed and went

Home to his memories for a month of pain,  
Each moment like a devil with a tongue,  
Urging him, "Set her free," or "Try again,"  
Or "Kill that man and stamp him into dung."  
"See her," he cried. He took his horse and swung  
Out on the road to her; the rain was falling;  
Her dropping house-eaves splashed him when he knocked  
there, calling.

Drowned yellow jasmine dripped; his horse's flanks  
Steamed, and dark runnels on his yellow hair  
Streaked the groomed surface into blotchy ranks.  
The noise of water dropping filled the air.  
He knocked again; but there was no one there;  
No one within, the door was locked, no smoke  
Came from the chimney stacks, no clock ticked, no one spoke,

Only the water dripped and dribble-dripped,  
And gurgled through the rain-pipe to the butt;  
Drops, trickling down the windows, paused or slipped:  
A wet twig scrated as though the glass were cut.  
The blinds were all drawn down, the windows shut.  
No one was there. Across the road a shawl  
Showed at a door a space; a woman gave a call.

"They're gone away," she cried. "They're gone away.  
Been gone a matter of a week." Where to?  
The woman thought to Wales, but could not say,  
Nor if she planned returning; no one knew.  
She looked at Lion sharply; then she drew  
The half-door to its place and passed within,  
Saying she hoped the rain would stop and spring begin.

Lion rode home. A month went by, and now  
Winter was gone; the myriad shoots of green  
Bent to the wind, like hair, upon the plough,  
And up from withered leaves came celandine.  
And sunlight came, though still the air was keen,  
So that the first March market was most fair,  
And Lion rode to market, having business there.

And in the afternoon, when all was done,  
While Lion waited idly near the inn,  
Watching the pigeons sidling in the sun,  
As Jim the ostler put his gelding in,  
He heard a noise of rioting begin  
Outside the yard, with catcalls; there were shouts  
Of "Occleve. Lion Occleve," from a pack of louts,

Who hung about the courtyard-arch, and cried,  
"Yah, Occleve, of The Roughs, the married man,  
Occleve, who had the bed and not the bride."  
At first without the arch; but some began  
To sidle in, still calling; children ran  
To watch the baiting; they were farmers' leavings  
Who shouted thus, men cast for drunkenness and thievings.

Lion knew most of them of old; he paid  
No heed to them, but turned his back and talked  
To Jim, of through-pin in his master's jade,  
And how no horse-wounds should be stuped or caulked.  
The rabble in the archway, not yet baulked,  
Came crowding nearer, and the boys began,  
"Who was it took your mistress, master married man?"

"Who was it, master, took your wife away?"  
"I wouldn't let another man take mine."  
"She had two husbands on her wedding day."  
"See at a blush: he blushed as red as wine."  
"She'd ought a had a cart-whip laid on fine."  
The farmers in the courtyard watched the baiting,  
Grinning, the barmaids grinned above the window grating.

Then through the mob of brawlers Michael stepped  
Straight to where Lion stood. "I come," he said,  
"To give you back some words which I have kept  
Safe in my heart till I could see them paid.  
You lied about Sue Jones; she died a maid  
As far as I'm concerned, and there's your lie  
Full in your throat, and there, and there, and in your eye.

"And there's for stealing Mary" . . . as he struck,  
He slipped upon a piece of peel and dropped  
Souise in a puddle of the courtyard muck;  
Loud laughter followed when he rose up sopped.  
Friends rushed to intervene, the fight was stopped.  
The two were hurried out by different ways.  
Men said, "'Tis stopp'd for now, but not for many days."

April appeared, the green earth's impulse came,  
Pushing the singing sap until each bud  
Trembled with delicate life as soft as flame,  
Filled by the mighty heart-beat as with blood;  
Death was at ebb, and Life in brimming flood.  
But little joy in life could Lion see,  
Striving to gird his will to set his loved one free,

While in his heart a hope still struggled dim  
That the mad hour would pass, the darkness break,  
The fever die, and she return to him,  
The routed nightmare let the sleeper wake.  
"Then we could go abroad," he cried, "and make  
A new life, soul to soul; oh, love! return."  
"Too late," his heart replied. At last he rode to learn.

Bowed, but alive with hope, he topped the pass,  
And saw, below, her cottage by the way,  
White, in a garden green with springing grass,  
And smoke against the blue sky going gray.  
"God make us all the happier for to-day,"  
He muttered humbly; then, below, he spied,  
Mary and Michael entering, walking side by side.

Arm within arm, like lovers, like dear lovers  
Matched by the happy stars and newly wed,  
Over whose lives a rosy presence hovers.  
Lion dismounted, seeing hope was dead.  
A child was by the road, he stroked his head,  
And "Little one," he said, "who lives below  
There, in the cottage there, where those two people go?"

"They do," the child said, pointing: "Mrs. Gray  
Lives in the cottage there, and he does, too.  
They've been back near a week since being away."  
It was but seal to what he inly knew.  
He thanked the child and rode. The Spring was blue,  
Bluer than ever, and the birds were glad;  
Such rapture in the hedges all the blackbirds had.

He was not dancing to that pipe of the Spring.  
He reached The Roughts, and there, within her room  
Bowed for a time above her wedding ring,  
Which had so chained him to unhappy doom;  
All his dead marriage haunted in the gloom  
Of that deserted chamber; all her things  
Lay still as she had left them when her love took wings.

He kept a bitter vigil through the night,  
Knowing his loss, his ten years' passion wasted,  
His life all blasted, even at its height,  
His cup of life's fulfilment hardly tasted.  
Gray on the budding woods the morning hasted,  
And looking out he saw the dawn come chill  
Over the shaking acre pale with daffodil.

Birds were beginning in the meadows; soon  
The blackbirds and the thrushes with their singing  
Piped down the withered husk that was the moon,  
And up the sky the ruddy sun came winging.  
Cows plodded past, yokes clanked, the men were bringing  
Milk from the barton. Someone shouted "Hup,  
Dog, drive them dangy red ones down away on up."

Some heavy hours went by before he rose.  
He went out of the house into the grass,  
Down which the wind flowed much as water flows;  
The daffodils bowed down to let it pass.  
At the brook's edge a boggy bit there was,  
Right at the field's north corner, near the bridge,  
Fenced by a ridge of earth; he sat upon the ridge,

Watching the water running to the sea,  
Watching the bridge, the stile, the path beyond,  
Where the white violet's sweetness brought the bee,  
He paid the price of being overfond.  
The water babbled always from the pond  
Over the pretty shallows, chattering, tinkling,  
With trembles from the sunlight in its clearness wrinkling.

So gazing, like one stunned, it reached his mind,  
That the hedge-brambles overhung the brook  
More than was right, making the selva blind;  
The dragging brambles too much flotsam took.  
Dully he thought to mend. He fetched a hook,  
And standing in the shallow stream he slashed,  
For hours, it seemed; the thorns, the twigs, the dead leaves  
splashed,

Splashed and were bobbed away across the shallows;  
Pale grasses with the sap gone from them fell,  
Sank, or were carried down beyond the shallows.  
The bruised ground-ivy gave out earthy smell.  
"I must be dead," he thought, "and this is hell."  
Fiercely he slashed, till, glancing at the stile,  
He saw that Michael stood there, watching, with a smile,

His old contemptuous smile of careless ease,  
As though the world with all its myriad pain  
Sufficed, but only just sufficed, to please.  
Michael was there, the robber come again.  
A tumult ran like flame in Lion's brain;  
Then, looking down, he saw the flowers shake:  
Gold, trembling daffodils; he turned, he plucked a stake

Out of the hedge that he had come to mend,  
And flung his hook to Michael, crying, "Take;  
We two will settle our accounts, my friend,  
Once and for ever. May the Lord God make  
You see your sins in time." He whirled his stake  
And struck at Michael's head; again he struck;  
While Michael dodged and laughed, "Why, man, I bring you  
luck.

"Don't kill a bringer of good news. You fool,  
Stop it and listen. I have come to say:  
Lion, for God's sake, listen and be cool.  
You silly hothead, put that stake away.  
Listen, I tell you." But he could not stay  
The anger flaming in that passionate soul.  
Blows rained upon him thick; they stung; he lost control.

Till, "If you want to fight," he cried, "let be.  
Let me get off the bridge and we will fight.  
That firm bit by the quag will do for me.  
So. Be on guard, and God defend the right.  
You foaming madman, with your hell's delight,  
Smashing a man with stakes before he speaks:  
On guard. I'll make you humbler for the next few weeks."

The ground was level there; the daffodils  
Glimmered and danced beneath their cautious feet,  
Quartering for openings for the blow that kills.  
Beyond the bubbling brook a thrust was sweet.  
Quickly the footsteps slid; with feint and cheat,  
The weapons poised and darted and withdrew.  
"Now stop it," Michael said, "I want to talk to you."

"We do not stop till one of us is dead,"  
Said Lion, rushing in. A short blow fell  
Dizzily, through all guard, on Michael's head.  
His hedging-hook slashed blindly but too well:  
It struck in Lion's side. Then, for a spell,  
Both, sorely stricken, staggered, while their eyes  
Dimmed under mists of blood; they fell, they tried to rise,-

Tried hard to rise, but could not, so they lay,  
Watching the clouds go sailing on the sky,  
Touched with a redness from the end of day.  
There was all April in the blackbird's cry.  
And lying there they felt they had to die,  
Die and go under mould and feel no more  
April's green fire of life go running in earth's core.

"There was no need to hit me," Michael said;  
"You quiet thinking fellows lose control.  
This fighting business is a foolish trade.  
And now we join the grave-worm and the mole.  
I tried to stop you. You're a crazy soul;  
You always were hot-headed. Well, let be:  
You deep and passionate souls have always puzzled me.

"I'm sorry that I struck you. I was hit,  
And lashed out blindly at you; you were mad.  
It would be different if you'd stopped a bit.  
You are too blind when you are angry, lad.  
Oh, I am giddy, Lion; dying, bad,  
Dying." He raised himself, he sat, his look  
Grew greedy for the water bubbling in the brook.

And as he watched it, Lion raised his head  
Out of a bloodied clump of daffodil.  
"Michael," he moaned, "I, too, am dying; dead.  
You're nearer to the water. Could you fill  
Your hat and give me drink? Or would it spill?  
Spill, I expect." "I'll try," said Michael, "try—  
I may as well die trying, since I have to die."

Slowly he forced his body's failing life  
Down to the water; there he stooped and filled;  
And as his back turned Lion drew his knife,  
And hid it close, while all his being thrilled  
To see, as Michael came, the water spilled,  
Nearer and ever nearer, bright, so bright.  
"Drink," muttered Michael, "drink. We two shall sleep  
to-night."

He tilted up the hat, and Lion drank.  
Lion lay still a moment, gathering power,  
Then rose, as Michael gave him more, and sank.  
Then, like a dying bird whom death makes tower,  
He raised himself above the bloodied flower  
And struck with all his force in Michael's side.  
"You should not have done that," his stricken comrade cried.

"No; for I meant to tell you, Lion; meant  
To tell you; but I cannot now; I die.  
That hit me to the heart and I am spent.  
Mary and I have parted; she and I  
Agreed she must return, lad. That is why  
I came to see you. She is coming here,  
Back to your home to-night. Oh, my beloved dear.



"You come to tread a bloody path of flowers.  
All the gold flowers are covered up with blood  
And the bright bugles blow along the towers;  
The bugles triumph like the Plate in flood."  
His spilled life trickled down upon the mud  
Between weak, clutching fingers. "Oh," he cried,  
"This isn't what we planned here years ago." He died.

Lion lay still while the cold tides of death  
Came brimming up his channels. With one hand  
He groped to know if Michael still drew breath.  
His little hour was running out its sand.  
Then, in a mist, he saw his Mary stand  
Above. He cried aloud, "He was my brother.  
I was his comrade sworn, and we have killed each other.

"Oh desolate grief, beloved, and through me.  
We wise who try to change. Oh, you wild birds,  
Help my unhappy spirit to the sea.  
The golden bowl is shattered into shreds."  
And Mary knelt and murmured passionate words  
To that poor body on the dabbled flowers:  
"Oh, beauty, oh, sweet soul, oh, little love of ours—

"Michael, my own heart's darling, speak; it's me,  
Mary. You know my voice. I'm here, dear, here.  
Oh, little golden-haired one, listen. See,  
It's Mary, Michael. Speak to Mary, dear.  
Oh, Michael, little love, he cannot hear;  
And you have killed him, Lion; he is dead.  
My little friend, my love, my Michael, golden head.

"We had such fun together, such sweet fun,  
My love and I, my merry love and I.  
Oh, love, you shone upon me like the sun.  
Oh, Michael, say some little last good-bye."  
Then in a great voice Lion called, "I die.  
Go home and tell my people. Mary. Hear.  
Though I have wrought this ruin, I have loved you, dear.

"Better than he; not better, dear, as well.  
If you could kiss me, dearest, at this last.  
We have made bloody doorways from our hell,  
Cutting our tangle. Now, the murder past,  
We are but pitiful poor souls; and fast  
The darkness and the cold come. Kiss me, sweet;  
I loved you all my life; but some lives never meet

"Though they go wandering side by side through Time.  
Kiss me," he cried. She bent, she kissed his brow.  
"Oh, friend," she said, "you're lying in the slime."  
"Three blind ones, dear," he murmured, "in the slough,  
Caught fast for death; but never mind that now;  
Go home and tell my people. I am dying,  
Dying dear, dying now." He died; she left him lying,

And kissed her dead one's head and crossed the field.  
"They have been killed," she called, in a great crying.  
"Killed, and our spirits' eyes are all unsealed.  
The blood is scattered on the flowers drying."  
It was the hush of dusk, and owls were flying;  
They hooted as the Occleves ran to bring  
That sorry harvest home from Death's red harvesting.

They laid the bodies on the bed together.  
And "You were beautiful," she said, "and you  
Were my own darling in the April weather.  
You knew my very soul, you knew, you knew.  
Oh, my sweet, piteous love, I was not true.  
Fetch me fair water and the flowers of spring;  
My love is dead, and I must deck his burying."

They left her with her dead; they could not choose  
But grant the spirit burning in her face  
Rights that their pity urged them to refuse.  
They did her sorrow and the dead a grace.  
All night they heard her passing footsteps trace  
Down to the garden from the room of death.  
They heard her singing there, lowly, with gentle breath,

To the cool darkness full of sleeping flowers,  
Then back, still singing soft, with quiet tread,  
But at the dawn her singing gathered powers  
Like to the dying swan who lifts his head  
On Eastnor lifts it, singing, dabbled red,  
Singing the glory in his tumbling mind,  
Before the doors burst in, before death strikes him blind.

So triumphing her song of love began,  
Ringing across the meadows like old woe  
Sweetened by poets to the help of man  
Unconquered in eternal overthrow;  
Like a great trumpet from the long ago  
Her singing towered; all the valley heard.  
Men jingling down to meadow stopped their teams and  
stirred.

And they, the Occleves, hurried to the door  
And burst it, fearing; there the singer lay  
Drooped at her lover's bedside on the floor,  
Singing her passionate last of life away.  
White flowers had fallen from a blackthorn spray  
Over her loosened hair. Pale flowers of spring  
Filled the white room of death; they covered everything.

Primroses, daffodils, and cuckoo-flowers.  
She bowed her singing head on Michael's breast.  
"Oh, it was sweet," she cried, "that love of ours.  
You were the dearest, sweet; I loved you best.  
Beloved, my beloved, let me rest  
By you forever, little Michael mine.  
Now the great hour is stricken, and the bread and wine

"Broken and spilt; and now the homing birds  
Draw to a covert, Michael; I to you.  
Bury us two together," came her words.  
The dropping petals fell about the two.  
Her heart had broken; she was dead. They drew  
Her gentle head aside; they found it pressed  
Against the brodered 'kerchief spread on Michael's breast.

The one that bore her name in Michael's hair,  
Given so long before. They let her lie  
While the dim moon died out upon the air,  
And happy sunlight coloured all the sky.  
The last cock crowed for morning; carts went by;  
Smoke rose from cottage chimneys; from the byre  
The yokes went clanking by, to dairy, through the mire.

In the day's noise the water's noise was stilled,  
But still it slipped along, the cold hill-spring,  
Dropping from leafy hollows, which it filled,  
On to the pebbly shelves which made it sing;  
Glints glittered on it from the 'fisher's wing;  
It saw the moorhen nesting; then it stayed  
In a great space of reeds where merry otters played.

Slowly it loitered past the shivering reeds  
Into a mightier water; thence its course  
Becomes a pasture where the salmon feeds,  
Wherein no bubble tells its humble source;  
But the great waves go rolling, and the horse  
Snorts at the bursting waves and will not drink,  
And the great ships go outward, bubbling to the brink,

Outward, with men upon them, stretched in line,  
Handling the halliards to the ocean's gates,  
Where flicking windflaws fill the air with brine,  
And all the ocean opens. Then the mates  
Cry, and the sunburnt crew no longer waits,  
But sings triumphant, and the topsail fills  
To this old tale of woe among the daffodils.



*From*  
PHILIP THE KING  
THE MESSENGER'S SPEECH



## PHILIP THE KING

### MESSENGER.

We were to ship the troops in Calais Road;  
They lay encamped, prepared to go aboard.  
To windward still the English fleet abode—  
Still as in port when peace has been restored.

The wind and sea were fair,  
We lay at anchor there;  
The stars burned in the air,  
The men were sleeping,  
When in the midnight dark  
Our watchman saw a spark  
Suddenly light a bark  
With long flames leaping.

Then, as they stood amazed,  
Others and others blazed;  
Then terror set them crazed,  
They ran down screaming:  
“Fire-ships are coming! Wake  
Cast loose, for Jesus’ sake!  
Eight fire-ships come from Drake—  
Look at their gleaming!”

Roused in the dark from bed,  
We saw the fire show red,  
And instant panic spread  
Through troops and sailors;  
They swarmed on deck unclad,  
They did what terror bade,  
King, they were like the mad  
Escaped from jailers.



Some prayed for mercy, some  
Rang bells or beat the drum,  
As though despair had come  
At hell's contriving;  
Captains with terror pale  
Screamed through the dark their hail:  
"Cut cable, loose the sail.  
And set all driving!"

Heading all ways at once,  
Grinding each other's guns,  
Our blundering galleons  
Athwart-hawse galleys,  
Timbers and plankings cleft,  
And half our tackling reft,  
Your grand Armada left  
The roads of Calais.

Weary and overwrought  
We strove to make all taut;  
But when the morning brought  
The dawn to light us,  
Drake, with the weather gage,  
Made signal to engage,  
And, like a pard in rage,  
Bore down to fight us.

Nobly the English line  
Trampled the bubbled brine;  
We heard the gun-trucks whine  
To the taut laniard.  
Onwards we saw them forge,  
While billowing at the gorge.  
"On, on!" they cried, "St. Georgel  
Down with the Spaniard!"

From their van squadron broke  
A withering battle-stroke,  
Tearing our planked oak  
By straits asunder,  
Blasting the wood like rot  
With such a hail of shot,  
So constant and so hot  
It beat us under.

The English would not close;  
 They fought us as they chose,  
 Dealing us deadly blows  
 For seven hours.  
 Lords of our chiefest rank  
 The bitter billow drank,  
 For there the English sank  
 Three ships of ours.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then the wind forced us northward from the fight;  
 We could not ship the army nor return;  
 We held the sea in trouble through the night,  
 Watching the English signals blink and burn.  
 The English in a dim cloud kept astern;  
 All night they signalled, while our shattered ships  
 Huddled like beasts beneath the drovers' whips.

\* \* \* \* \*

At dawn the same wind held; we could not strive.  
 The English drove us north as herdsmen drive.

\* \* \* \* \*

Under our tattered flags,  
 With rigging cut to rags,  
 Our ships like stricken stags  
 Were heaped and hounded.  
 Caught by the unknown tide,  
 With neither chart nor guide,  
 We fouled the Holland side,  
 Where four more grounded.

Our water-casks were burst,  
 The horses died of thirst,  
 The wounded raved and curst,  
 Uncared, untended.  
 All night we heard the crying  
 Of lonely shipmates dying;  
 We had to leave them lying.  
 So the fight ended.

PHILIP.

God gives His victory as He wills. But this  
Was not complete destruction. What thing worse  
Came to destroy you?

MESSENGER.

An avenging curse,  
Due for old sins, destroyed us.

PHILIP.

Tell the tale.

MESSENGER.

O King, when morning dawned it blew a gale,  
But still the English followed, and we fled  
Till breakers made the dirty waters pale.  
We saw the Zealand sandbanks right ahead,  
Blind in a whirling spray that gave us dread;  
For we were blown there, and the water shoaled.  
The crying of the leadsmen at the lead,  
Calling the soundings, were our death-bells tolled.

We drifted down to death upon the sands—  
The English drew away to watch us drown;  
We saw the bitter breakers with grey hands  
Tear the dead body of the sandbank brown.  
We could do nothing, so we drifted down  
Singing the psalms for death—we who had been  
Lords of the sea and knights of great renown,  
Doomed to be strangled by a death unclean.

PHILIP.

So there the ships were wrecked?

MESSENGER.

Time had not struck.

O King, we learned how blessed mercy saves:  
Even as our forefoot grounded on the muck,  
Tripping us up to drown us in the waves,

A sudden windshift snatched us from our graves  
And drove us north; and now another woe,  
Tempest unending, beat our ships to staves  
A never-dying gale with frost and snow.

Now our hearts failed, for food and water failed;  
The men fell sick by troops, the wounded died.  
They washed about the wet decks as we sailed  
For want of strength to lift them overside.  
Desolate seas we sailed, so grim, so wide,  
That ship by ship our comrades disappeared.  
With neither sun nor star to be a guide,  
Like spirits of the wretched dead we steered.

Till, having beaten through the Pentland Pass,  
We saw the Irish surf, with mists of spray  
Blowing far inland, blasting trees and grass,  
And gave God thanks, for we espied a bay  
Safe, with bright water running down the clay—  
A running brook where we could drink and drink.  
But drawing near, our ships were cast away,  
Bilged on the rocks; we saw our comrades sink . . .

Or worse: for those the breakers cast ashore  
The Irish killed and stripped; their bodies white  
Lay naked to the wolves—yea, sixty score—  
All down the windy beach, a piteous sight.  
The savage Irish watched by bonfire light  
Lest more should come ashore; we heard them there  
Screaming the bloody news of their delight.  
Then we abandoned hope and new despair.

And now the fleet is sunken in the sea,  
And all the seamen, all the might of Spain,  
Are dead, O King, and out of misery,  
Never to drag at frozen ropes again—  
Never to know defeat, nor feel the pain  
Of watching dear companions sink and die.  
Death's everlasting armistice to the brain  
Gives their poor griefs quietus; let them lie.

I, like a ghost returning from the grave,  
Come from a stricken ship to tell the news  
Of Spanish honour which we could not save,  
Nor win again, nor even die to lose;  
And since God's hidden wisdom loves to bruise  
Those whom He loves, we, trembling in despair,  
Will watch our griefs to see God's finger there,  
And make His will our solace and excuse.

Defeat is bitter and the truth is hard—  
Spain is defeated, England has prevailed;  
This is the banner which I could not guard,  
And this the consecrated sword which failed.  
Do with your dying Captain as you will.

## OTHER POEMS



## TRUTH

MAN with his burning soul  
Has but an hour of breath  
To build a ship of truth  
In which his soul may sail—  
Sail on the sea of death,  
For death takes toll  
Of beauty, courage, youth,  
Of all but truth.

Life's city ways are dark,  
Men mutter by; the wells  
Of the great waters moan.  
O death! O sea! O tide!  
The waters moan like bells;  
No light, no mark,  
The soul goes out alone  
On seas unknown.

Stripped of all purple robes,  
Stripped of all golden lies,  
I will not be afraid,  
Truth will preserve through death.  
Perhaps the stars will rise—  
The stars like globes;  
The ship my striving made  
May see night fade.

## THE WANDERER

ALL day they loitered by the resting ships,  
Telling their beauties over, taking stock;  
At night the verdict left my messmates' lips,  
"The *Wanderer* is the finest ship in dock."



I had not seen her, but a friend, since drowned,  
Drew her, with painted ports, low, lovely, lean,  
Saying, "The *Wanderer*, clipper, outward bound,  
The loveliest ship my eyes have ever seen—

"Perhaps to-morrow you will see her sail.  
She sails at sunrise": but the morrow showed  
No *Wanderer* setting forth for me to hail;  
Far down the stream men pointed where she rode.

Rode the great trackway to the sea, dim, dim,  
Already gone before the stars were gone.  
I saw her at the sea-line's smoky rim  
Grow swiftly vaguer as they towed her on.

Soon even her masts were hidden in the haze  
Beyond the city; she was on her course  
To trample billows for a hundred days;  
That afternoon the norther gathered force,

Blowing a small snow from a point of east.  
"Oh, fair for her," we said, "to take her south."  
And in our spirits, as the wind increased,  
We saw her there, beyond the river mouth,

Setting her side-lights in the wildering dark,  
To glint upon mad water, while the gale  
Roared like a battle, snapping like a shark,  
And drunken seamen struggled with the sail.

While with sick hearts her mates put out of mind  
Their little children left astern, ashore,  
And the gale's gathering made the darkness blind.  
Water and air one intermingled roar.

Then we forgot her, for the fiddlers played,  
Dancing and singing held our merry crew;  
The old ship moaned a little as she swayed.  
It blew all night, oh, bitter hard it blew!

So that at midnight I was called on deck  
To keep an anchor-watch: I heard the sea  
Roar past in white procession filled with wreck:  
Intense bright frosty stars burned over me,

And the Greek brig beside us dipped and dipped,  
White to the muzzle like a half-tide rock,  
Drowned to the mainmast with the seas she shipped;  
Her cable-swivels clanged at every shock.

And like a never-dying force, the wind  
Roared till we shouted with it, roared until  
Its vast vitality of wrath was thinned,  
Had beat its fury breathless and was still.

By dawn the gale had dwindled into flaw,  
A glorious morning followed: with my friend  
I climbed the fo'c's'le-head to see; we saw  
The waters hurrying shorewards without end.

Haze blotted out the river's lowest reach;  
Out of the gloom the steamers, passing by,  
Called with their sirens, hooting their sea-speech;  
Out of the dimness others made reply.

And as we watched, there came a rush of feet  
Charging the fo'c's'le till the hatchway shook.  
Men all about us thrust their way, or beat,  
Crying, "*The Wanderer!* Down the river! Look!"

I looked with them towards the dimness; there  
Gleamed like a spirit striding out of night,  
A full-rigged ship unutterably fair,  
Her masts like trees in winter, frosty-bright.

Foam trembled at her bows like wisps of wool;  
She trembled as she towed. I had not dreamed  
That work of man could be so beautiful,  
In its own presence and in what it seemed.

"So, she is putting back again," I said.  
"How white with frost her yards are on the fore!"  
One of the men about me answer made,  
"That is not frost, but all her sails are tore,

"Torn into tatters, youngster, in the gale;  
Her best foul-weather suit gone." It was true,  
Her masts were white with rags of tattered sail  
Many as gannets when the fish are due.

Beauty in desolation was her pride,  
Her crowned array a glory that had been;  
She faltered tow'rds us like a swan that died,  
But although ruined she was still a queen.

"Put back with all her sails gone," went the word;  
Then, from her signals flying, rumour ran,  
"The sea that stove her boats in killed her third;  
She has been gutted and has lost a man."

So, as though stepping to a funeral march,  
She passed defeated homewards whence she came  
Ragged with tattered canvas white as starch,  
A wild bird that misfortune had made tame.

She was refitted soon: another took  
The dead man's office; then the singers hove  
Her capstan till the snapping hawsers shook;  
Out, with a bubble at her bows, she drove.

Again they towed her seawards, and again  
We, watching, praised her beauty, praised her trim,  
Saw her fair house-flag flutter at the main,  
And slowly saunter seawards, dwindling dim;

And wished her well, and wondered, as she died,  
How, when her canvas had been sheeted home,  
Her quivering length would sweep into her stride,  
Making the greenness milky with her foam.

But when we rose next morning, we discerned  
Her beauty once again a shattered thing;  
Towing to dock the *Wanderer* returned,  
A wounded sea-bird with a broken wing.

A spar was gone, her rigging's disarray  
Told of a worse disaster than the last;  
Like draggled hair dishevelled hung the stay,  
Drooping and beating on the broken mast.

Half-mast upon her flagstaff hung her flag;  
Word went among us how the broken spar  
Had gored her captain like an angry stag,  
And killed her mate a half-day from the bar.

She passed to dock upon the top of flood.  
An old man near me shook his head and swore:  
"Like a bad woman, she has tasted blood—  
There'll be no trusting in her any more."

We thought it truth, and when we saw her there  
Lying in dock, beyond, across the stream,  
We would forget that we had called her fair,  
We thought her murderess and the past a dream.

And when she sailed again, we watched in awe,  
Wondering what bloody act her beauty planned,  
What evil lurked behind the thing we saw,  
What strength was there that thus annulled man's hand.

How next its triumph would compel man's will  
Into compliance with external Fate,  
How next the powers would use her to work ill  
On suffering men; we had not long to wait.

For soon the outcry of derision rose,  
"Here comes the *Wanderer!*" the expected cry.  
Guessing the cause, our mockings joined with those  
Yelled from the shipping as they towed her by.

She passed us close, her seamen paid no heed  
To what was called: they stood, a sullen group,  
Smoking and spitting, careless of her need,  
Mocking the orders given from the poop.

Her mates and boys were working her; we stared.  
What was the reason of this strange return,  
This third annulling of the thing prepared?  
No outward evil could our eyes discern.

Only like one who having formed a plan  
Beyond the pitch of common minds, she sailed,  
Mocked and deserted by the common man,  
Made half divine to me for having failed.

We learned the reason soon; below the town  
A stay had parted like a snapping reed,  
"Warning," the men thought, "not to take her down."  
They took the omen, they would not proceed.

Days passed before another crew would sign.  
The *Wanderer* lay in dock alone, unmanned,  
Feared as a thing possessed by powers malign,  
Bound under curses not to leave the land.

But under passing Time fear passes too;  
That terror passed, the sailors' hearts grew bold.  
We learned in time that she had found a crew  
And was bound out and southwards as of old.

And in contempt we thought, "A little while  
Will bring her back again, dismantled, spoiled.  
It is herself; she cannot change her style;  
She has the habit now of being foiled."

So when a ship appeared among the haze,  
We thought, "The *Wanderer* back again"; but no,  
No *Wanderer* showed for many, many days,  
Her passing lights made other waters glow.

But we would often think and talk of her,  
Tell newer hands her story, wondering, then,  
Upon what ocean she was *Wanderer*,  
Bound to the cities built by foreign men.

And one by one our little conclave thinned,  
Passed into ships and sailed and so away,  
To drown in some great roaring of the wind,  
Wanderers themselves, unhappy fortune's prey.

And Time went by me making memory dim,  
Yet still I wondered if the *Wanderer* fared  
Still pointing to the unreach'd ocean's rim,  
Brightening the water where her breast was bared.

And much in ports abroad I eyed the ships,  
Hoping to see her well-remembered form  
Come with a curl of bubbles at her lips  
Bright to her berth, the sovereign of the storm.

I never did, and many years went by,  
Then, near a Southern port, one Christmas Eve,  
I watched a gale go roaring through the sky,  
Making the caldrons of the clouds upheave.

Then the wrack tattered and the stars appeared,  
Millions of stars that seemed to speak in fire;  
A byre cock cried aloud that morning neared,  
The swinging wind-vane flashed upon the spire.

And soon men looked upon a glittering earth,  
Intensely sparkling like a world new-born;  
Only to look was spiritual birth,  
So bright the raindrops ran along the thorn.

So bright they were, that one could almost pass  
Beyond their twinkling to the source, and know  
The glory pushing in the blade of grass,  
That hidden soul which makes the flowers grow.

That soul was there apparent, not revealed,  
Unearthly meanings covered every tree,  
That wet grass grew in an immortal field,  
Those waters fed some never-wrinkled sea.

The scarlet berries in the hedge stood out  
Like revelations but the tongue unknown;  
Even in the brooks a joy was quick: the trout  
Rushed in a dumbness dumb to me alone.

All of the valley was aloud with brooks;  
I walked the morning, breasting up the fells,  
Taking again lost childhood from the rooks,  
Whose cawing came above the Christmas bells.

I had not walked that glittering world before,  
But up the hill a prompting came to me,  
"This line of upland runs along the shore:  
Beyond the hedgerow I shall see the sea."

And on the instant from beyond away  
That long familiar sound, a ship's bell, broke  
The hush below me in the unseen bay.  
Old memories came: that inner prompting spoke.

And bright above the hedge a seagull's wings  
Flashed and were steady upon empty air.  
"A Power unseen," I cried, "prepares these things;  
Those are her bells, the *Wanderer* is there."



The windows glitter on the distant hill;  
Beyond the hedge the sheep-bells in the fold  
Stumble on sudden music and are still;  
The forlorn pinewoods droop above the wold.

An endless quiet valley reaches out  
Past the blue hills into the evening sky;  
Over the stubble, cawing, goes a rout  
Of rooks from harvest, flagging as they fly.

So beautiful it is, I never saw  
So great a beauty on these English fields,  
Touched by the twilight's coming into awe,  
Ripe to the soul and rich with summer's yields.

\* \* \* \* \*

These homes, this valley spread below me here,  
The rooks, the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen,  
Have been the heartfelt things, past-speaking dear  
To unknown generations of dead men,

Who, century after century, held these farms,  
And, looking out to watch the changing sky,  
Heard, as we hear, the rumours and alarms  
Of war at hand and danger pressing nigh.

And knew, as we know, that the message meant  
The breaking off of ties, the loss of friends,  
Death, like a miser getting in his rent,  
And no new stones laid where the trackway ends.

The harvest not yet won, the empty bin,  
The friendly horses taken from the stalls,  
The fallow on the hill not yet brought in,  
The cracks unplastered in the leaking walls.

Yet heard the news, and went discouraged home,  
And brooded by the fire with heavy mind,  
With such dumb loving of the Berkshire loam  
As breaks the dumb hearts of the English kind,

Then sadly rose and left the well-loved Downs,  
And so by ship to sea, and knew no more  
The fields of home, the byres, the market towns,  
Nor the dear outline of the English shore,



But knew the misery of the soaking trench,  
 The freezing in the rigging, the despair  
 In the revolting second of the wrench  
 When the blind soul is flung upon the air,  
 And died (uncouthly, most) in foreign lands  
 For some idea but dimly understood  
 Of an English city never built by hands  
 Which love of England prompted and made good.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

If there be any life beyond the grave,  
 It must be near the men and things we love,  
 Some power of quick suggestion how to save,  
 Touching the living soul as from above.

An influence from the Earth from those dead hearts  
 So passionate once, so deep, so truly kind,  
 That in the living child the spirit starts,  
 Feeling companioned still, not left behind.

Surely above these fields a spirit broods  
 A sense of many watchers muttering near  
 Of the lone Downland with the forlorn woods  
 Loved to the death, inestimably dear.

A muttering from beyond the veils of Death  
 From long-dead men, to whom this quiet scene  
 Came among blinding tears with the last breath,  
 The dying soldier's vision of his queen.

All the unspoken worship of those lives  
 Spent in forgotten wars at other calls  
 Glimmers upon these fields where evening drives  
 Beauty like breath, so gently darkness falls.

Darkness that makes the meadows holier still,  
 The elm-trees sadden in the hedge, a sigh  
 Moves in the beech-clump on the haunted hill,  
 The rising planets deepen in the sky,

And silence broods like spirit on the braise,  
 A glimmering moon begins, the moonlight runs  
 Over the grasses of the ancient way  
 Rutted this morning by the passing guns.

## BIOGRAPHY

WHEN I am buried, all my thoughts and acts  
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,  
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten  
The dates which made me will be all forgotten;  
And none will know the gleam there used to be  
About the feast-days freshly kept by me,  
But men will call the golden hour of bliss  
"About this time," or "shortly after this."

Men do not heed the rungs by which men climb  
Those glittering steps, those milestones upon Time,  
Those tombstones of dead selves, those hours of birth  
Those moments of the soul in years of earth.  
They mark the height achieved, the main result,  
The power of freedom in the perished cult,  
The power of boredom in the dead man's deeds,  
Not the bright moments of the sprinkled seeds.

By many waters and on many ways  
I have known golden instants and bright days;  
The day on which, beneath an arching sail,  
I saw the Cordilleras and gave hail;  
The summer day on which in heart's delight  
I saw the Swansea Mumbles bursting white;  
The glittering day when all the waves wore flags,  
And the ship *Wanderer* came with sails in rags;  
That curlew-calling time in Irish dusk,  
When life became more splendid than its husk,  
When the rent chapel on the brae at Slains  
Shone with a doorway opening beyond brains;  
The dawn when, with a brace-block's creaking cry,  
Out of the mist a little barque slipped by,  
Spilling the mist with changing gleams of red,  
Then gone, with one raised hand and one turned head  
The howling evening when the spindrift's mists  
Broke to display the Four Evangelists,  
Snow-capped, divinely granite, lashed by breakers,  
Wind-beaten bones of long since buried acres;

The night alone near water when I heard  
All the sea's spirit spoken by a bird;  
The English dusk when I beheld once more  
(With eyes so changed) the ship, the citted shore,  
The lines of masts, the streets so cheerly trod  
(In happier seasons), and gave thanks to God.  
All had their beauty, their bright moments' gift,  
Their something caught from Time, the ever-swift.

All of those gleams were golden; but life's hands  
Have given more constant gifts in changing lands,  
And when I count those gifts, I think them such  
As no man's bounty could have bettered much:  
The gift of country life, near hills and woods,  
Where happy waters sing in solitudes;  
The gift of being near ships, of seeing each day  
A city of ships with great ships under weigh;  
The great street paved with water, filled with shipping  
And all the world's flags flying and seagulls dipping.

Yet when I am dust my penman may not know  
Those water-tramplng ships which made me glow,  
But think my wonder mad and fail to find  
Their glory, even dimly, from my mind,  
And yet they made me. Not alone the ships,  
But men hard-palmed from tallying-on to whips,  
The two close friends of nearly twenty years,  
Sea-followers both, sea-wrestlers and sea-peers,  
Whose feet with mine wore many a bolthead bright  
Treading the decks beneath the riding light.  
Yet death will make that warmth of friendship cold,  
And who'll know what one said and what one told,  
Our hearts' communion and the broken spells  
When the loud call blew at the strike of bells?  
No one, I know, yet let me be believed,  
A soul entirely known is life achieved.

Years blank with hardship never speak a word,  
Live in the soul to make the being stirred;  
Towns can be prisons, where the spirit dulls  
Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,  
Away from all bright water and great hills  
And sheep-walks, where the curlews cry their fills

Away in towns, where eyes have nought to see  
But dead museums and miles of misery,  
And floating life unrooted from man's need,  
And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch greed,  
And life made wretched out of human ken,  
And miles of shopping women served by men.  
So, if the penman sums my London days,  
Let him but say that there were holy ways,  
Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick mansions old,  
With stinking doors, where women stood to scold,  
And drunken waits at Christmas with their horn,  
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was born;  
And windy gas-lamps and the wet roads shining,  
And that old carol of the midnight whining,  
And that old room (above the noisy slum),  
Where there was wine and fire and talk with some  
Under strange pictures of the wakened soul,  
To whom this earth was but a burnt-out coal.

O Time, bring back those midnights and those friends,  
Those glittering moments that a spirit lends,  
That all may be imagined from the flash,  
The cloud-hid god-game through the lightning gash,  
Those hours of stricken sparks from which men took  
Light to send out to men in song or book.  
Those friends who heard St. Pancras's bells strike two  
Yet stayed until the barber's cockerel crew,  
Talking of noble styles, the Frenchman's best,  
The thought beyond great poets not expressed,  
The glory of mood where human frailty failed,  
The forts of human light not yet assailed,  
Till the dim room had mind, and seemed to brood,  
Binding our wills to mental brotherhood,  
Till we became a college, and each night  
Was discipline and manhood and delight,  
Till our farewells, and winding down the stairs  
At each grey dawn had meaning that Time spares,  
That we, so linked, should roam the whole world round  
Teaching the ways our brooding minds had found,  
Making that room our Chapter, our one mind,  
Where all that this world soiled should be refined.

Often at night I tread those streets again,  
And see the alley glimmering in the rain;  
Yet now I miss that sign of earlier tramps,  
A house with shadows of plane-boughs under lamps  
The secret house where once a beggar stood  
Trembling and blind to show his woe for food.  
And now I miss that friend who used to walk  
Home to my lodgings with me, deep in talk,  
Wearing the last of night out in still streets  
Trodden by us and policemen on their beats  
And cats, but else deserted. Now I miss  
That lively mind and guttural laugh of his,  
And that strange way he had of making gleam,  
Like something real, the art we used to dream.

London has been my prison; but my books,  
Hills and great waters, labouring men and brooks,  
Ships and deep friendships, and remembered days,  
Which even now set all my mind ablaze,  
As that June day when, in the red bricks' chinks,  
I saw the old Roman ruins white with pinks,  
And felt the hillside haunted even then  
By not dead memory of the Roman men.  
And felt the hillside thronged by souls unseen,  
Who knew the interest in me, and were keen  
That man alive should understand man dead,  
So many centuries since the blood was shed.  
And quickened with strange hush because this comer  
Sensed a strange soul alive behind the summer.

That other day on Ercall when the stones  
Were sunbleached white, like long unburied bones,  
While the bees droned and all the air was sweet  
From honey buried underneath my feet.  
Honey of purple heather and white clover  
Sealed in its gummy bags till summer's over.  
Then other days by water, by bright sea,  
Clear as clean glass and my bright friend with me,  
The cove clean bottomed where we saw the brown  
Red spotted plaice go skimming six feet down  
And saw the long fronds waving, white with shells,  
Waving, unfolding, drooping, to the swells;

That sadder day when we beheld the great  
And terrible beauty of a Lammas spate  
Roaring white-mouthed in all the great cliff's gaps  
Headlong, tree-tumbling fury of collapse,  
While drenching clouds drove by and every sense  
Was water roaring or rushing or in offence  
And mountain sheep stood huddled and blown gaps gleamed  
Where torn white hair of torrents shook and streamed.  
That sadder day when we beheld again  
A spate going down in sunshine after rain,  
When the blue reach of water leaping bright  
Was one long ripple and clatter, flecked with white,  
And that far day, that never blotted page  
When youth was bright like flowers about old age,  
Fair generations bringing thanks for life  
To that old kindly man and trembling wife  
After their sixty years: Time never made  
A better beauty since the Earth was laid,  
Than that thanksgiving given to grey hair  
For the great gift of life which brought them there.

Days of endeavour have been good: the days  
Racing in cutters for the comrade's praise,  
The day they led my cutter at the turn  
Yet could not keep the lead and dropped astern  
The moment in the spurt when both boats' oars  
Dipped in each other's wash and throats grew hoarse  
And teeth ground into teeth and both strokes quickened  
Lashing the sea, and gasps came, and hearts sickened  
And coxswains damned us, dancing, banking stroke,  
To put our weights on, though our hearts were broke  
And both boats seemed to stick and sea seemed glue,  
The tide a mill-race we were struggling through  
And every quick recover gave us squints  
Of them still there and oar-tossed water-glints,  
And cheering came, our friends, our foemen cheering,  
A long, wild, rallying murmur on the hearing  
"Port Fore!" and "Starboard Fore!" "Port Fore!" "Port  
Fore!"  
"Up with her, Starboard," and at that each oar

Lightened, though arms were bursting, and eyes shut  
And the oak stretchers grunted in the strut  
And the curse quickened from the cox, our bows  
Crashed, and drove talking water, we made vows,  
Chastity vows and temperance; in our pain  
We numbered things we'd never eat again  
If we could only win; then came the yell  
"Starboard," "Port Fore," and then a beaten bell  
Rung as for fire to cheer us. "Now." Oars bent  
Soul took the looms now body's bolt was spent,  
"Give way, come on now!" "On now!" "On now!" "Starboard."

"Port Fore!" "Up with her, Port!" each cutter harboured  
Ten eye-shut painsick strugglers, "Heave, oh, heave!"  
Catcalls waked echoes like a shrieking sheave.  
"Heave!" and I saw a back, then two. "Port Fore."  
"Starboard!" "Come on!" I saw the midship oar  
And knew we had done them. "Port Fore!" "Starboard!"  
"Now!"

I saw bright water spurting at their bow,  
Their cox' full face an instant. They were done.  
The watchers' cheering almost drowned the gun.  
We had hardly strength to toss our oars; our cry  
Cheering the losing cutter was a sigh.

Other bright days of action have seemed great:  
Wild days in a pampero off the Plate;  
Good swimming days, at Hog Back or the Coves  
Which the young gannet and the corbie loves;  
Surf-swimming between rollers, catching breath  
Between the advancing grave and breaking death,  
Then shooting up into the sunbright smooth  
To watch the advancing roller bare her tooth,  
And days of labour also, loading, hauling;  
Long days at winch or capstan, heaving, pawling;  
The days with oxen, dragging stone from blasting,  
And dusty days in mills, and hot days masting.  
Trucking on dust-dry deckings smooth like ice,  
And hunts in mighty wool-racks after mice;  
Mornings with buckwheat when the fields did blanch  
With White Leghorns come from the chicken ranch.

Days near the spring upon the sunburnt hill,  
Plying the maul or gripping tight the drill.  
Delights of work most real—delights that change  
The headache life of towns to rapture strange  
Not known by townsmen, nor imagined; health  
That puts new glory upon mental wealth  
And makes the poor man rich. But that ends, too,  
Health with its thoughts of life; and that bright view  
That sunny landscape from life's peak, that glory,  
And all a glad man's comments on life's story,  
And thoughts of marvellous towns and living men,  
And what pens tell and all beyond the pen,  
End, and are summed in words so truly dead,  
They raise no image of the heart and head,  
The life, the man alive, the friend we knew,  
The mind ours argued with or listened to,  
None; but are dead, and all life's keenness, all,  
Is dead as print before the funeral,  
Even deader after, when the dates are sought,  
And cold minds disagree with what we thought.

This many pictured world of many passions  
Wears out the nations as a woman fashions,  
And what life is is much to very few,  
Men being so strange, so mad, and what men do  
So good to watch or share; but when men count  
Those hours of life that were a bursting fount,  
Sparkling the dusty heart with living springs,  
There seems a world, beyond our earthly things,  
Gated by golden moments, each bright time  
Opening to show the city white like lime,  
High-towered and many-peopled. This made sure,  
Work that obscures those moments seems impure,  
Making our not-returning time of breath  
Dull with the ritual and records of death,  
That frost of fact by which our wisdom gives  
Correctly stated death to all that lives.

Best trust the happy moments. What they gave  
Makes man less fearful of the certain grave,  
And gives his work compassion and new eyes,  
The days that make us happy make us wise.



## SONG

ONE sunny time in May  
 When lambs were sporting,  
 The sap ran in the spray  
 And I went courting,  
 And all the apple-boughs  
 Were bright with blossom,  
 I picked an early rose  
 For my love's bosom.

And then I met her friend,  
 Down by the water,  
 Who cried, "She's met her end,  
 That grey-eyed daughter,  
 That voice of hers is stilled.  
 Her beauty broken."  
 Oh, me! my love is killed,  
 My love unspoken.

She was too sweet, too dear,  
 To die so cruel.  
 O Death, why leave me here  
 And take my jewel?  
 Her voice went to the bone,  
 So true, so ringing,  
 And now I go alone  
 Winter or spring.

## SHIPS

I CANNOT tell their wonder nor make known  
 Magic that once thrilled through me to the bone,  
 But all men praise some beauty, tell some tale,  
 Vent a high mood which makes the rest seem pale.  
 Pour their heart's blood to flourish one green leaf,  
 Follow some Helen for her gift of grief,  
 And fail in what they mean, whate'er they do:  
 You should have seen, man cannot tell to you  
 The beauty of the ships of that my city.

That beauty now is spoiled by the sea's pity:  
 For one may haunt the pier a score of times  
 Hearing St. Nicholas' bells ring out the chimes,  
 Yet never see those proud ones swaying home,  
 With mainyards backed and bows a cream of foam,  
 Those bows so lovely-curving, cut so fine  
 Those coulters of the many-bubbled brine,  
 As once, long since, when all the docks were filled  
 With that sea beauty man has ceased to build.

Yet though their splendour may have ceased to be,  
 Each played her sovereign part in making me;  
 Now I return my thanks with heart and lips  
 For the great queenliness of all those ships.

And first the first bright memory, still so clear,  
 An autumn evening in a golden year,  
 When in the last lit moments before dark  
 The *Chepica*, a steel-gray lovely barque,  
 Her trucks aloft in sun-glow red as blood,  
 Came to an anchor near us on the flood.  
 Then come so many ships that I could fill  
 Three docks with their fair hulls remembered still,  
 Each with her special memory's special grace,  
 Riding the sea, making the waves give place  
 To delicate high beauty; man's best strength,  
 Noble in every line in all their length.  
*Ailsa*, *Genista*, ships, with long jib-booms,  
 The *Wanderer* with great beauty and strange dooms,  
*Liverpool* (mightiest then) superb, sublime,  
 The *California* huge, as slow as Time.  
 The *Cutty Sark*, the perfect *J. T. North*,  
 The loveliest barque my city<sup>day</sup> of light<sup>forth</sup>.  
 Dainty *Redgauntlet*, well rer  
 The splendid *Argus* with h  
 Stalwart *Drumcliff*, white-<sup>saw</sup> how spotted,  
 Divine bright ships, the <sup>that</sup> old home their prize.  
*Melpomene*, *Euphrosyne*, a taff had come to bend.  
 Sea-troubling sisters of, my sword was rotted,  
*Corunna* (in whom my f<sup>g</sup> on which to set my eyes  
 Long since loved *Esme*<sup>der</sup> of the end.

*Centurion* passed in Rio, *Glaucus* spoken,  
*Aladdin* burnt, the *Bidston* water broken,  
*Yola* in whom my friend sailed, *Dawpota* trim,  
 Fierce-bowed *Egeria* plunging to the swim,  
*Stanmore* wide-sterned, sweet *Cupica*, tall *Bard*,  
 Queen in all harbours with her moonsail yard.

Though I tell many there must still be others,  
 M'Vickar Marshall's ships and Fernie Brothers'  
*Lochs*, *Counties*, *Shires*, *Drums*, the countless lines  
 Whose house-flags all were once familiar signs  
 At high main trucks on Mersey's windy ways  
 When sun made all the wind-white water blaze.  
 Their names bring back old mornings when the docks  
 Shone with their house-flags and their painted blocks,  
 Their raking masts below the Custom House  
 And all the marvellous beauty of their bows.

Familiar steamers, too, majestic steamers,  
 Shearing Atlantic roller-tops to steamers  
*Umbria*, *Etruria*, noble, still at sea,  
 The grandest, then, that man had brought to be.  
*Majestic*, *City of Paris*, *City of Rome*,  
 Forever jealous racers, out and home.  
 The Alfred Holt's blue smokestacks down the stream,  
 The fair *Arabian* with her bows a-cream.  
 Booth liners, Anchor liners, Red Star liners,  
 The marks and styles of countless ship designers.  
 The *Magdalena*, *Puno*, *Potosi*,  
 Lost *Cotopaxi*, all well known to me.

#### THEIR VOICE

These splendid once thrilled with her grace, her glory,  
 Her name all men praise some comrade's story,  
 Still vent a high mood which life's need,  
 "Pour their heart's blood to you indeed.  
 Follow some Helen for her dear them" sounds most brave,  
 And fail in what they mean to have;  
 You should have seen, man me to grips  
 The beauty of the ships of these ships.

That art untouched by softness, all that line  
Drawn ringing hard to stand the test of brine;  
That nobleness and grandeur, all that beauty  
Born of a manly life and bitter duty;  
That splendour of fine bows which yet could stand  
The shock of rollers never checked by land.  
That art of masts, sail-crowded, fit to break,  
Yet stayed to strength, and back-stayed into rake,  
The life demanded by that art, the keen  
Eye-puckered, hard-case seamen, silent, lean,  
They are grander things than all the art of towns,  
Their tests are tempests and the sea that drowns.  
They are my country's line, her great art done  
By strong brains labouring on the thought unwon,  
They mark our passage as a race of men,  
Earth will not see such ships as those agen.

## SONNET

(FROM THE SPANISH OF FRANCISCO A. QUEVEDO)

I SAW the ramparts of my native land,  
One time so strong, now dropping in decay,  
Their strength destroyed by this new age's way,  
That has worn out and rotted what was grand.

I went into the fields: there I could see  
The sun drink up the waters newly thawed,  
And on the hills the moaning cattle pawed;  
Their miseries robbed the day of light for me.

I went into my house: I saw how spotted,  
Decaying things made that old home their prize.  
My withered walking-staff had come to bend.  
I felt the age had won; my sword was rotted,  
And there was nothing on which to set my eyes  
That was not a reminder of the end.

## SONNET ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE

(FROM THE PORTUGUESE OF ANTONIO DI FERREIRO)

THAT blessed sunlight, that once showed to me  
 My way to heaven more plain, more certainly,  
 And with her bright beams banished utterly  
 All trace of mortal sorrow far from me,  
 Has gone from me, has left her prison sad,  
 And I am blind and alone and gone astray,  
 Like a lost pilgrim on a desert way  
 Wanting the blessed guide that once he had.

Thus with a spirit bowed and mind a blur  
 I trace the holy steps where she has gone  
 By valleys and by meadows and by mountains,  
 And everywhere I catch a glimpse of her,  
 She takes me by the hand and leads me on,  
 And my eyes follow her—my eyes made fountains.

## THEY CLOSED HER EYES

(FROM THE SPANISH OF GUSTAVO A. BECQUÉR)

THEY closed her eyes,  
 They were still open;  
 They hid her face,  
 With a white linen,  
 And some sobbing,  
 Others in silence,  
 From the sad bedroom  
 All came away.

The nightlight in a dish  
 Burned on the floor;  
 It threw on the wall  
 The bed's shadow,  
 And in that shadow  
 One saw some times  
 Drawn in sharp line  
 The body's shape.

These sunbeams sidled when the vessel rolled,  
Their lazy yellow dust-strips crossed the floor,  
Lighting a man-hole leading to the hold,  
A man-hole leaded down the day before.

Like gold the solder on the man-hole shone;  
A few flies threading in a drowsy dance  
Slept in their pattern, darted, and were gone.  
The river roared against the ship's advance.

And quietly sleep came upon the crew,  
Man by man drooped upon his arms and slept;  
Without, the tugboat dragged the vessel through,  
The rigging whined, the yelling water leapt,

Till blindly a careering wave's collapse  
Rose from beneath her bows and spouted high,  
Spiriting the fo'c's'le floor with noisy slaps;  
A sleeper at the table heaved a sigh,

And lurched, half-drunk with sleep, across the floor,  
Muttering and blinking like a man insane,  
Cursed at the river's tumult, shut the door,  
Blinked, and lurched back and fell asleep again.

Then there was greater silence in the room,  
Ship's creakings ran along the beams and died,  
The lazy sunbeams loitered up the gloom,  
Stretching and touching till they reached the side.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yet something jerking in the vessel's course  
Told that the tug was getting her in hand  
As, at a fence, one steadies down a horse,  
To rush the whirlpool on Magellan Sand;

And in the uneasy water just below  
Her Mate inquired "if the men should stir  
And come on deck?" Her Captain answered "No,  
Let them alone, the tug can manage her."

Then, as she settled down and gathered speed,  
Her Mate inquired again "if they should come  
Just to be ready there in case of need,  
Since, on such godless bars, there might be some."

But "No," the Captain said, "the men have been  
Boxing about since midnight, let them be.  
The pilot 's able and the ship 's a queen,  
The hands can rest until we come to quay."

They ceased, they took their stations; right ahead  
The whirlpool heaped and sucked; in tenor tone  
The steady leadsman chanted at the lead,  
The ship crept forward trembling to the bone.

And just above the worst a passing wave  
Brought to the line such unexpected stress  
That as she tossed her bows her towrope gave,  
Snapped at the collar like a stalk of cress.

Then, for a ghastly moment, she was loose,  
Blind in a whirlpool, groping for a guide,  
Swinging adrift without a moment's truce,  
She struck the sand and fell upon her side.

And instantly the sand beneath her gave  
So that she righted and again was flung,  
Grinding the quicksand open for a grave,  
Straining her masts until the steel was sprung.

The foremast broke; its mighty bulk of steel  
Fell on the fo'c's'le door and jammed it tight;  
The sand-rush heaped her to an even keel,  
She settled down, resigned, she made no fight,

But, like an overladen beast, she lay  
Dumb in the mud with billows at her lips,  
Broken, where she had fallen in the way,  
Grinding her grave among the bones of ships.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the first crashing of the mast, the men  
Sprang from their sleep to hurry to the deck;  
They found that Fate had caught them in a pen.  
The door that opened out was jammed with wreck.

Then, as with shoulders down, their gathered strength  
Hove on the door, but could not make it stir,  
They felt the vessel tremble through her length;  
The tug, made fast again, was plucking her.

Plucking, and causing motion, till it seemed  
That she would get her off; they heard her screw  
Mumble the bubbled rip-rap as she steamed;  
"Please God, the tug will shift her!" said the crew.

"She's off!" the seamen said; they felt her glide,  
Scraping the bottom with her bilge, until  
Something collapsing clanged along her side;  
The scraping stopped, the tugboat's screw was still.

"She's holed!" a voice without cried; "holed and jammed--  
Holed on the old *Magellan*, sunk last June.  
I lose my ticket and the men are damned;  
They'll drown like rats unless we free them soon.

"My God, they shall not!" and the speaker beat  
Blows with a crow upon the foremast's wreck;  
Minute steel splinters fell about his feet,  
No tremor stirred the ruin on the deck.

And as their natures bade, the seamen learned  
That they were doomed within that buried door;  
Some cursed, some raved, but one among them turned  
Straight to the manhole leaded in the floor,

And sitting down astride it, drew his knife,  
And staidly dug to pick away the lead,  
While at the ports his fellows cried for life:  
"Burst in the door, or we shall all be dead!"

For like a brook the leak below them clucked.  
They felt the vessel settling; they could feel  
How the blind bog beneath her gripped and sucked  
Their fingers beat their prison walls of steel.

And then the gurgling stopped—the ship was still.  
She stayed; she sank no deeper—an arrest  
Fothered the pouring leak; she ceased to fill,  
She trod the mud, drowned only to the breast.

And probing at the well, the captain found  
The leak no longer rising, so he cried;  
"She is not sinking—you will not be drowned;  
The shifting sand has silted up her side.



"Now there is time. The tug shall put ashore  
And fetch explosives to us from the town;  
I'll burst the house or blow away the door  
(It will not kill you if you all lie down).

"Be easy in your minds, for you 'll be free  
As soon as we've the blast." The seamen heard  
The tug go townwards, butting at the sea;  
Some lit their pipes, the youngest of them cheered.

But still the digger bent above the lid,  
Gouging the solder from it as at first,  
Pecking the lead, intent on what he did;  
The other seamen mocked at him or cursed.

And some among them nudged him as he picked.  
He cursed them, grinning, but resumed his game;  
His knife-point sometimes struck the lid and clicked.  
The solder-pellets shone like silver flame.

And still his knife-blade clicked like ticking time  
Counting the hour till the tug's return,  
And still the ship stood steady on the slime,  
While Fate above her fingered with her urn.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then from the tug beside them came the hail:  
"They have none at the stores, nor at the dock,  
Nor at the quarry, so I tried the gaol.  
They thought they had, but it was out of stock.

"So then I telephoned to town; they say  
They've sent an engine with some to the pier;  
I did not leave till it was on its way,  
A tug is waiting there to bring it here: "

"It can't be here, though, for an hour or more;  
I've lost an hour in trying, as it is.  
For want of thought commend me to the shore.  
You'd think they'd know their river's ways by this."

"So there is nothing for it but to wait,"  
The Captain answered, fuming. "Until then,  
We'd better go to dinner, Mr. Mate."  
The cook brought dinner forward to the men.

\* \* \* \* \*

Another hour of prison loitered by;  
The strips of sunlight stiffened at the port,  
But still the digger made the pellets fly,  
Paying no heed to his companions' sport,

While they, about him, spooning at their tins,  
Asked if he dug because he found it cold,  
Or whether it was penance for his sins,  
Or hope of treasure in the forward hold.

He grinned and cursed, but did not cease to pick,  
His sweat dropped from him when he bent his head.  
His knife-blade quarried down, till with a click  
Its grinded thinness snapped against the lead.

Then, dully rising, brushing back his sweat,  
He asked his fellows for another knife.  
"Never," they said; "man, what d'ye hope to get?"  
"Nothing," he said, "except a chance for life."

"Havers," they said, and one among them growled,  
"You'll get no knife from any here to break.  
You've dug the manhole since the door was fouled,  
And now your knife's broke, quit, for Jesus' sake."

But one, who smelt a bargain, changed his tone,  
Offering a sheath-knife for the task in hand  
At twenty times its value, as a loan  
To be repaid him when they reached the land.

And there was jesting at the lender's greed  
And mockery at the digger's want of sense,  
Closing with such a bargain without need,  
Since in an hour the tug would take them thence.

But "Right," the digger said. The deal was made,  
He took the borrowed knife, and sitting down  
Gouged at the channelled solder with the blade,  
Saying, "Let be, it's better dig than drown."

And nothing happened for a while; the heat  
Grew in the stuffy room, the sunlight slid,  
Flies buzzed about and jostled at the meat,  
The knife-blade clicked upon the manhole lid:

And one man said, "She takes a hell of time  
Bringing the blaster," and another snored;  
One, between pipe-puffs, hummed a smutty rhyme,  
One, who was weaving, thudded with his sword.

It was as though the ship were in a dream,  
Caught in a magic ocean, calm like death,  
Tranced, till a presence should arise and gleam,  
Making the waters conscious with her breath.

It was so drowsy that the river's cries,  
Roaring aloud their ever-changing tune,  
Came to those sailors like the drone of flies,  
Filling with sleep the summer afternoon.

So that they slept, or, if they spoke, it was  
Only to worry lest the tug should come:  
Such power upon the body labour has  
That prison seemed a blessed rest to some,

Till one man leaning at the port-hole, stared,  
Checking his yawning at the widest stretch,  
Then blinked and swallowed, while he muttered, scared,  
"That blasting-cotton takes an age to fetch."

Then swiftly passing from the port he went  
Up and then down the fo'c's'le till he stayed,  
Fixed at the port-hole with his eyes intent,  
Round-eyed and white, as if he were afraid,

And muttered as he stared, "My God! she is.  
She's deeper than she was, she's settling down.  
That palm-tree top was steady against this,  
And now I see the quay below the town.

"Look here at her. She's sinking in her tracks.  
She's going down by inches as she stands;  
The water's darker and it stinks like flax,  
Her going down is churning up the sands."

And instantly a panic took the crew,  
Even the digger blenched; his knife-blade's haste  
Cutting the solder witnessed that he knew  
Time on the brink with not a breath to waste.

While far away the tugboat at the quay  
Under her drooping pennon waited still  
For that explosive which would set them free,  
Free, with the world a servant to their will.

Then from a boat beside them came a blare,  
Urging that tugboat to be quick; and men  
Shouted to stir her from her waiting there,  
"Hurry the blast, and get us out of pen.

"She 's going down. She 's going down, man! Quick!"  
The tugboat did not stir, no answer came;  
They saw her tongue-like pennon idly lick  
Clear for an instant, lettered with her name,

Then droop again. The engine had not come,  
The blast had not arrived. The prisoned hands  
Saw her still waiting though their time had come,  
Their ship was going down among the sands,

Going so swiftly now, that they could see  
The banks arising as she made her bed;  
Full of sick sound she settled deathward, she  
Gurgled and shook, the digger picked the lead.

And, as she paused to take a final plunge,  
Prone like a half-tide rock, the men on deck  
Jumped to their boats and left, ere like a sponge  
The river's rotten heart absorbed the wreck;

And on the perilous instant ere Time struck  
The digger's work was done, the lead was cleared,  
He cast the manhole up; below it muck  
Floated, the hold was full, the water leered.

All of his labour had but made a hole  
By which to leap to death; he saw black dust  
Float on the bubbles of that brimming bowl,  
He drew a breath and took his life in trust,

And plunged head foremost into that black pit,  
Where floating cargo bumped against the beams  
He groped a choking passage blind with grit,  
The roaring in his ears was shot with scream\*

So, with a bursting heart and roaring ears  
He floundered in that sunk ship's inky womb.  
Drowned in deep water for what seemed like years,  
Buried alive and groping through the tomb,

Till suddenly the beams against his back  
Gave, and the water on his eyes was bright;  
He shot up through a hatchway foul with wrack  
Into clean air and life and dazzling light,

And striking out, he saw the fo'c's'le gone,  
Vanished, below the water, and the mast  
Standing columnar from the sea; it shone  
Proud, with its colours flying to the last.

And all about, a many-wrinkled tide  
Smoothed and erased its eddies, wandering chilled,  
Like gluttoned purpose, trying to decide  
If its achievement had been what it willed.

And men in boats were there; they helped him in.  
He gulped for breath and watched that patch of smooth,  
Shaped like the vessel, wrinkle into grin,  
Furrow to waves and bare a yellow tooth.

Then the masts leaned until the shroud-screws gave.  
All disappeared—her masts, her colours, all.  
He saw the yardarms tilting to the grave;  
He heard the siren of a tugboat call,

And saw her speeding, foaming at the bow,  
Bringing the blast charge that had come too late.  
He heard one shout, "It isn't wanted now."  
Time's minute-hand had been the hand of Fate.

Then the boats turned; they brought him to the shore.  
Men crowded round him, touched him, and were kind;  
The Mate walked with him, silent, to the store.  
He said, "We've left the best of us behind."

Then, as he wrung his sodden clothes, the Mate  
Gave him a drink of rum, and talked awhile  
Of men and ships and unexpected Fate;  
And darkness came and cloaked the river's guile,

So that its huddled hurry was not seen,  
Only made louder, till the full moon climbed  
Over the forest, floated, and was queen.  
Within the town a temple-belfry chimed.

Then, upon silent pads, a tiger crept  
Down to the river-brink, and crouching there  
Watched it intently, till you thought he slept  
But for his ghastly eye and stiffened hair.

Then, trembling at a lust more fell than his,  
He roared and bounded back to coverts lone,  
Where, among moonlit beauty, slaughter is,  
Filling the marvellous night with myriad groan.

## WATCHING BY A SICK-BED

I HEARD the wind all day,  
And what it was trying to say.  
I heard the wind all night  
Rave as it ran to fight;  
After the wind the rain,  
And then the wind again  
Running across the hill  
As it runs still.

And all day long the sea  
Would not let the land be,  
But all night heaped her sand  
On to the land;  
I saw her glimmer white  
All through the night,  
Tossing the horrid hair  
Still tossing there.

And all day long the stone  
Felt how the wind was blown;  
And all night long the rock  
Stood the sea's shock;  
While, from the window, I  
Looked out, and wondered why,  
Why at such length  
Such force should fight such strength.



**LOLLINGDON DOWNS**  
**AND OTHER POEMS, WITH SONNETS**





## LOLLINGDON DOWNS

### 1

SO I have known this life,  
These beads of coloured days.  
This self the string.  
What is this thing?

Not beauty, no; not greed,  
Oh, not indeed;  
Not all, though much;  
Its colour is not such.

It has no eyes to see,  
It has no ears;  
It is a red hour's war  
Followed by tears.

It is an hour of time,  
An hour of road,  
Flesh is its goad;  
Yet, in the sorrowing lands,  
Women and men take hands.

O earth, give us the corn,  
Come rain, come sun;  
We men who have been born  
Have tasks undone.  
Out of this earth  
Comes the thing birth, •  
The thing unguessed, unwon.

## II

O WRETCHED man, that for a little mile  
Crawls beneath heaven for his brother's blood,  
Whose days the planets number with their style.  
To whom all earth is slave, all living, food!  
O withering man, within whose folded shell  
Lies yet the seed, the spirit's quickening corn,  
That Time and Sun will change out of the cell  
Into green meadows, in the world unborn!  
If Beauty be a dream, do but resolve  
And fire shall come, that in the stubborn clay  
Works to make perfect till the rocks dissolve,  
The barriers burst, and Beauty takes her way:  
Beauty herself, within whose blossoming Spring  
Even wretched man shall clap his hands and sing.

## III

Out of the special cell's most special sense  
Came the suggestion when the light was sweet;  
All skill, all beauty, all magnificence,  
Are hints so caught, man's glimpse of the complete.  
And, though the body rots, that sense survives;  
Being of life's own essence, it endures  
(Fruit of the spirit's tillage in men's lives)  
Round all this ghost that wandering flesh immures.  
That is our friend, who, when the iron brain  
Assails, or the earth clogs, or the sun hides,  
Is the good God to whom none calls in vain,  
Man's Achieved Good, which, being Life, abides:  
The man-made God, that man in happy breath  
Makes in despite of Time and dusty Death.

## IV

You are the link which binds us each to each.  
Passion, or too much thought, alone can end  
Beauty, the ghost, the spirit's common speech,  
Which man's red longing left us for our friend.

Even in the blinding war I have known this,  
That flesh is but the carrier of a ghost  
Who, through his longing, touches that which is  
Even as the sailor knows the foreign coast.  
So by the bedside of the dying black  
I felt our uncouth souls subtly made one:  
Forgiven, the meanness of each other's lack;  
Forgiven, the petty tale of ill things done.  
We were but Man, who for a tale of days  
Seeks the one city by a million ways.

V

I COULD not sleep for thinking of the sky,  
The unending sky, with all its million suns  
Which turn their planets everlastingly  
In nothing, where the fire-haired comet runs.  
If I could sail that nothing, I should cross  
Silence and emptiness with dark stars passing;  
Then, in the darkness, see a point of gloss  
Burn to a glow, and glare, and keep amassing,  
And rage into a sun with wandering planets,  
And drop behind; and then, as I proceed,  
See his last light upon his last moon's granites  
Die to a dark that would be night indeed:  
Night where my soul might sail a million years  
In nothing, not even Death, not even tears.

VI

How did the nothing come, how did these fires,  
These million-leagues of fires, first toss their hair,  
Licking the moons from heaven in their ires,  
Flinging them forth for them to wander there?  
What was the Mind? Was it a mind which thought?  
Or chance? or law? or conscious law? or power?  
Or a vast balance by vast clashes wrought?  
Or Time at trial with Matter for an hour?  
Or is it all a body where the cells  
Are living things supporting something strange,  
Whose mighty heart the singing planet swells  
As it shoulders nothing in unending change?  
Is this green earth of many-peopled pain  
Part of a life, a cell within a brain?

## VII

It may be so; but let the unknown be.  
 We, on this earth, are servants of the sun:  
 Out of the sun comes all the quick in me,  
 His golden touch is life to everyone.  
 His power it is that makes us spin through space;  
 His youth is April and his manhood bread;  
 Beauty is but a looking on his face;  
 He clears the mind, he makes the roses red.  
 What he may be, who knows? But we are his;  
 We roll through nothing round him, year by year,  
 The withering leaves upon a tree which is,  
 Each with his greed, his little power, his fear,  
 What we may be, who knows? But every one  
 Is dust on dust a servant of the sun.

## VIII

THE Kings go by with jewelled crowns;  
 Their horses gleam, their banners shake, their spears are  
     many.  
 The sack of many-peopled towns  
 Is all their dream;  
 The way they take  
 Leaves but a ruin in the brake,  
 And, in the furrow that the ploughmen make,  
 A stampless penny: a tale, a dream.

The merchants reckon up their gold;  
 Their letters come, their ships arrive, their freights are  
     glories;  
 The profits of their treasure sold  
 They tell and sum;  
 Their foremen drive  
 The servants starved to half-alive,  
 Whose labours do but make the earth a hive  
 Of stinking stories: a tale, a dream.

The priests are singing in their stalls;  
 Their singing lifts, their incense burns, their praying clamours;  
 Yet God is as the sparrow falls;  
 The ivy drifts,  
 The votive urns  
 Are all left void when Fortune turns;  
 The god is but a marble for the kerns  
 To break with hammers: a tale, a dream.

O Beauty, let me know again  
 The green earth cold, the April rain, the quiet waters figuring  
     sky,  
 The one star risen.  
 So shall I pass into the feast  
 Not touched by King, merchant, or priest;  
 Know the red spirit of the beast,  
 Be the green grain;  
 Escape from prison.

## IX

WHAT is this life which uses living cells  
 It knows not how nor why, for no known end,  
 This soul of man upon whose fragile shells  
 Of blood and brain his very powers depend?  
 Pour out its little blood or touch its brain,  
 The thing is helpless, gone, no longer known;  
 The carrion cells are never man again,  
 No hand relights the little candle blown.  
 It comes not from Without, but from the sperm  
 Fed in the womb; it is a man-made thing  
 That takes from man its power to live a term,  
 Served by live cells of which it is the King.  
 Can it be blood and brain? It is most great.  
 Through blood and brain alone it wrestles Fate.

## X

CAN it be blood and brain, this transient force  
 Which, by an impulse, seizes flesh and grows  
 To man, the thing less splendid than the horse,  
 More blind than owls, less lovely than the rose?

Oh, by a power unknown it works the cells  
 Of blood and brain; it has the power to see  
 Beyond the apparent thing the something else  
 Which it inspires dust to bring to be.  
 Both blood and brain are its imperfect tools,  
 Easily wrecked, soon worn, slow to attain;  
 Only by years of toil the master rules  
 To lovely ends those servants, blood and brain.  
 And Death, a touch, a germ, has still the force  
 To make him ev'n as the rose, the owl, the horse.

## XI

Not only blood and brain its servants are;  
 There is a finer power that needs no slaves,  
 Whose lovely service distance cannot bar,  
 Nor the green sea with all her hell of waves;  
 Nor snowy mountains, nor the desert sand,  
 Nor heat, nor storm, it bends to no control;  
 It is a stretching of the spirit's hand  
 To touch the brother's or the sister's soul;  
 So that from darkness in the narrow room  
 I can step forth and be about her heart,  
 Needing no star, no lantern in the gloom,  
 No word from her, no pointing on the chart,  
 Only red knowledge of a window flung  
 Wide to the night, and calling without tongue.

## XII

DROP me the seed, that I even in my brain  
 May be its nourishing earth. No mortal knows  
 From what immortal granary comes the grain,  
 Nor how the earth conspires to make the rose;  
 But from the dust and from the wetted mud  
 Comes help, given or taken; so with me,  
 Deep in my brain the essence of my blood  
 Shall give it stature until Beauty be.  
 It will look down, even as the burning flower  
 Smiles upon June, long after I am gone.  
 Dust-footed Time will never tell its hour,  
 Through dusty Time its rose will draw men on,  
 Through dusty Time its beauty will make plain  
 Man, and, Without, a spirit-scattering grain.

XIII

AH, but Without there is no spirit scattering;  
 Nothing but Life, most fertile but unwise,  
 Passing through change in the sun's heat and cloud's watering,  
 Pregnant with self, unlit by inner eyes.  
 There is no sower, nor seed for any tillage;  
 Nothing but the grey brain's pash, and the tense will,  
 And that poor fool of the Being's little village  
 Feeling for the truth in the little veins that thrill.  
 There is no Sowing, but digging, year by year,  
 In a hill's heart, now one way, now another,  
 Till the rock breaks and the valley is made clear,  
 And the poor Fool stands, and knows the sun for his brother,  
 And the Soul shakes wings like a bird escaped from cage,  
 And the tribe moves on to camp in its heritage.

XIV

| You are too beautiful for mortal eyes,  
 | You the divine unapprehended soul;  
 The red worm in the marrow of the wise  
 Stirs as you pass, but never sees you whole.  
 Even as the watcher in the midnight tower  
 Knows from a change in heaven an unseen star,  
 So from your beauty, so from the summer flower,  
 So from the light, one guesses what you are.  
 So in the darkness does the traveller come  
 To some lit chink, through which he cannot see,  
 More than a light, nor hear, more than a hum,  
 Of the great hall where Kings in council be.  
 So, in the grave, the red and mouthless worm  
 Knows of the soul that held his body firm.

XV

Is it a sea on which the souls embark  
 Out of the body, as men put to sea?  
 Or do we come like candles in the dark  
 In the rooms in cities in eternity?



Is it a darkness that our powers can light?  
 Is this, our little lantern of man's love,  
 A help to find friends wandering in the night  
 In the unknown country with no star above?  
 Or is it sleep, unknowing, outlasting clocks  
 That outlast men, that, though the cockcrow ring,  
 Is but one peace, of the substance of the rocks;  
 Is but one space in the now unquickened thing;  
 Is but one joy, that, though the million tire,  
 Is one, always the same, one life, one fire?

## XVI

## ✓ THE SHIP

## THE ORE

BEFORE Man's labouring wisdom gave me birth  
 I had not even seen the light of day;  
 Down in the central darkness of the earth,  
 Crushed by the weight of continents I lay,  
 Ground by the weight to heat, not knowing then  
 ✓ The air, the light, the noise, the world of men.

## THE TREES

We grew on mountains where the glaciers cry,  
 Infinite sombre armies of us stood  
 Below the snow-peaks which defy the sky;  
 A song like the gods moaning filled our wood;  
 ✓ We knew no men; our life was to stand stanch,  
 Singing our song, against the avalanche.

## THE HEMP AND FLAX

We were a million grasses on the hill,  
 A million herbs which bowed as the wind blew,  
 Trembling in every fibre, never still;  
 Out of the summer earth sweet life we drew.  
 Little blue-flowered grasses up the glen,  
 Glad of the sun, what did we know of men?

## THE WORKERS

We tore the iron from the mountain's hold,  
By blasting fires we smithied it to steel;  
Out of the shapeless stone we learned to mould  
The sweeping bow, the rectilinear keel;  
We hewed the pine to plank, we split the fir,  
We pulled the myriad flax to fashion her.

Out of a million lives our knowledge came,  
A million subtle craftsmen forged the means;  
Steam was our handmaid, and our servant flame,  
Water our strength, all bowed to our machines.  
Out of the rock, the tree, the springing herb,  
We built this wandering beauty so superb.

## THE SAILORS

We, who were born on earth and live by air,  
Make this thing pass across the fatal floor,  
The speechless sea; alone we commune there,  
Jesting with Death, that ever-open door.  
Sun, moon, and stars are signs by which we drive  
This wind-blown iron like a thing alive.

## THE SHIP

I march across great waters like a queen,  
I whom so many wisdoms helped to make;  
Over the uncruddled billows of seas green  
I blanch the bubbled highway of my wake.  
By me my wandering tenants clasp the hands  
And know the thoughts of men in other lands.

## XVII

NIGHT is on the downland, on the lonely moorland,  
On the hills where the wind goes o'er sheep-bitten turf,  
Where the bent grass beats upon the unploughed poorland  
And the pine-woods roar like the surf.

## 324 NIGHT IS ON THE DOWNLAND

Here the Roman lived on the wind-barren lonely,  
Dark now and haunted by the moorland fowl;  
None comes here now but the peewit only,  
And moth-like death in the owl.

Beauty was here, on this beetle-droning downland;  
The thought of a Cæsar in the purple came  
From the palace by the Tiber in the Roman townland  
To this wind-swept hill with no name.

Lonely Beauty came here and was here in sadness,  
Brave as a thought on the frontier of the mind,  
In the camp of the wild upon the march of madness,  
The bright-eyed Queen of the Blind.

Now where Beauty was are the wind-withered gorses,  
Moaning like old men in the hill-wind's blast;  
The flying sky is dark with running horses,  
And the night is full of the past.

### XVIII

Up on the downs the red-eyed kestrels hover,  
Eyeing the grass.  
The field-mouse flits like a shadow into cover  
As their shadows pass.

Men are burning the gorse on the down's shoulder;  
A drift of smoke  
Glitters with fire and hangs, and the skies smoulder,  
And the lungs choke.

Once the tribe did thus on the downs, on these downs  
burning  
Men in the frame.  
Crying to the gods of the downs till their brains were turning  
And the gods came.

And to-day on the downs, in the wind, the hawks, the grasses,  
In blood and air,  
Something passes me and cries as it passes.  
On the chalk downland bare.

XIX

No man takes the farm,  
Nothing grows there;  
The ivy's arm  
Strangles the rose there.

Old Farmer Kyrle  
Farmed there the last;  
He beat his girl  
(It 's seven years past).

After market it was  
He beat his girl;  
He liked his glass,  
Old Farmer Kyrle.

Old Kyrle's son  
Said to his father:  
"Now, dad, you ha' done,  
I'll kill you rather!

"Stop beating sister,  
Or by God I'll kill you!"  
Kyrle was full of liquor—  
Old Kyrle said: "Will you?"

Kyrle took his cobb'd stick  
And beat his daughter;  
He said: "I'll teach my chick  
As a father oughter."

Young Will, the son,  
Heard his sister shriek;  
He took his gun  
Quick as a streak.

He said: "Now, dad,  
Stop, once for all!"  
He was a good lad,  
Good at kicking the ball.

His father clubbed  
The girl on the head.  
Young Will upped  
And shot him dead.

"Now, sister," said Will,  
"I've a-killed father,  
As I said I'd kill.  
O my love, I'd rather

"A-kill him again  
Than see you suffer.  
O my little Jane,  
Kiss good-bye to your brother.

"I won't see you again.  
Nor the cows homing,  
Nor the mice in the grain,  
Nor the primrose coming,

"Nor the fair, nor folk,  
Nor the summer flowers  
Growing on the wold,  
Nor ought that 's ours.

"Not Tib the cat,  
Nor Stub the mare,  
Nor old dog Pat,  
Never anywhere.

"For I'll be hung  
In Gloucester prison  
When the bell 's rung  
And the sun 's risen."

\* \* \*

They hanged Will  
As Will said;  
With one thrill  
They choked him dead.

Jane walked the wold  
Like a grey gander;  
All grown old  
She would wander.

She died soon;  
At high-tide,  
At full moon,  
Jane died.

The brook chatters  
As at first;  
The farm it waters  
Is accurst.

No man takes it,  
Nothing grows there;  
Blood straits it,  
A ghost goes there.

XX

A HUNDRED years ago they quarried for the stone here;  
The carts came through the wood by the track still plain;  
The drills show in the rock where the blasts were blown here  
They show up dark after rain.

Then the last cart of stone went away through the wood,  
To build the great house for some April of a woman,  
Till her beauty stood in stone, as her man's thought made it  
good,  
And the dumb rock was made human.

The house still stands, but the April of its glory  
Is gone, long since, with the beauty that has gone;  
She wandered away west, it is an old sad story:  
It is best not talked upon.

And the man has gone, too, but the quarry that he made,  
Whenever April comes as it came in old time,  
Is a dear delight to the man who loves a maid,  
For the primrose comes from the lime. . . .

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And the blackbird builds below the catkin shaking,  
And the sweet white violets are beauty in the blood,  
And daffodils are there, and the blackthorn blossom  
    breaking  
Is a wild white beauty in bud.

XXI

HERE the legion halted, here the ranks were broken,  
And the men fell out to gather wood;  
And the green wood smoked, and bitter words were  
    spoken,  
And the trumpets called to food.

And the sentry on the rampart saw the distance dying  
In the smoke of distance blue and far,  
And herd the curlew calling and the owl replying  
As the night came cold with one star;

And thought of home beyond, over moorland, over  
    marshes,  
Over hills, over the sea, across the plains, across the pass,  
By a bright sea trodden by the ships of Tarshis,  
The farm, with cicadæ in the grass.

And thought, as I: "Perhaps, I may be done with living  
To-morrow, when we fight. I shall see those souls no more.  
O beloved souls, be beloved in forgiving  
The deeds and the words that make me sore."

XXII

LONG, long ago, when all the glittering earth  
Was heaven itself, when drunkards in the street  
Were like mazed kings shaking at giving birth  
To acts of war that sickle men like wheat;

When the white clover opened Paradise  
And God lived in a cottage up the brook,  
Beauty, you lifted up my sleeping eyes  
And filled my heart with longing with a look;  
And all the day I searched but could not find  
The beautiful dark-eyed who touched me there.  
Delight in her made trouble in my mind.  
She was within all nature, everywhere.  
The breath I breathed, the brook, the flower, the grass.  
Were her, her word, her beauty, all she was.

## XXIII

NIGHT came again, but now I could not sleep;  
The owls were watching in the yew, the mice  
Gnawed at the wainscot. The mid dark was deep.  
The death-watch knocked the dead man's summons thrice.  
The cats upon the pointed housetops peered  
About the chimneys, with lit eyes which saw  
Things in the darkness, moving, which they feared;  
The midnight filled the quiet house with awe.  
So, creeping down the stair, I drew the bolt  
And passed into the darkness, and I knew  
That beauty was brought near by my revolt.  
Beauty was in the moonlight, in the dew,  
But more within myself, whose venturous tread  
Walked the dark house where death-ticks called the dead.

## XXIV

EVEN after all these years there comes the dream  
Of lovelier life than this in some new earth,  
In the full summer of that unearthly gleam  
Which lights the spirit when the brain gives birth;  
Of a perfected I, in happy hours,  
Treading above the sea that trembles there,  
A path through thickets of immortal flowers  
That only grow where sorrows never were:



And, at a turn, of coming face to face  
With Beauty's self, that Beauty I have sought  
In women's hearts, in friends, in many a place,  
In barren hours passed at grips with thought,  
Beauty of woman, comrade, earth and sea,  
Incarnate thought come face to face with me.

## XXV

If I could come again to that dear place  
Where once I came, where Beauty lived and moved,  
Where, by the sea, I saw her face to face,  
That soul alive by which the world has loved;  
If, as I stood at gaze among the leaves,  
She would appear again as once before,  
While the red herdsman gathered up his sheaves  
And brimming waters trembled up the shore;  
If, as I gazed, her Beauty that was dumb,  
In that old time, before I learned to speak,  
Would lean to me and revelation come,  
Words to the lips and colour to the cheek,  
Joy with its searing-iron would burn me wise;  
I should know all, all powers, all mysteries.

## XXVI

HERE in the self is all that man can know  
Of Beauty, all the wonder, all the power,  
All the unearthly colour, all the glow,  
Here in the self which withers like a flower;  
Here in the self which fades as hours pass,  
And droops and dies and rots and is forgotten  
Sooner, by ages, than the mirroring glass  
In which it sees its glory still unrotten.  
Here in the flesh, within the flesh, behind,  
Swift in the blood and throbbing on the bone,  
Beauty herself, the universal mind,  
Eternal April wandering alone;  
The God, the holy Ghost, the atoning Lord,  
Here in the flesh, the never yet explored.

## XXVII

FLESH, I have knocked at many a dusty door,  
Gone down full many a windy midnight lane,  
Probed in old walls and felt along the floor,  
Pressed in blind hope the lighted window-pane.  
But useless all, though sometimes when the moon  
Was full in heaven and the sea was full,  
Along my body's alleys came a tune  
Played in the tavern by the Beautiful.  
Then for an instant I have felt at point  
To find and seize her, whosoe'er she be,  
Whether some saint whose glory doth anoint  
Those whom she loves, or but a part of me,  
Or something that the things not understood  
Make for their uses out of flesh and blood.

## XXVIII

BUT all has passed, the tune has died away,  
The glamour gone, the glory; is it chance?  
Is the unfeeling mud stabbed by a ray  
Cast by an unseen splendour's great advance?  
Or does the glory gather crumb by crumb  
Unseen, within, as coral islands rise,  
Till suddenly the apparitions come  
Above the surface, looking at the skies?  
Or does sweet Beauty dwell in lovely things  
Scattering the holy hintings of her name  
In women, in dear friends, in flowers, in springs,  
In the brook's voice, for us to catch the same?  
Or is it we who are Beauty, we who ask?  
We by whose gleams the word fulfils its task.

## XXIX

THESE myriad days, these many thousand hours,  
A man's long life, so choked with dusty things,  
How little perfect poise with perfect powers,  
Joy at the heart and Beauty at the springs.

One hour, or two, or three, in long years scattered  
 Sparks from a smithy that have fired a thatch,  
 Are all that life has given and all that mattered;  
 The rest, all heaving at a moveless latch.  
 For these, so many years of useless toil,  
 Despair, endeavour, and again despair,  
 Sweat, that the base machine may have its oil,  
 Idle delight to tempt one everywhere.  
 A life upon the cross. To make amends,  
 Three flaming memories that the deathbed ends.

## XXX

THERE, on the darkened deathbed, dies the brain  
 That flared three several times in seventy years.  
 It cannot lift the silly hand again,  
 Nor speak, nor sing, it neither sees nor hears;  
 And muffled mourners put it in the ground  
 And then go home, and in the earth it lies  
 Too dark for vision and too deep for sound,  
 The million cells that made a good man wise.  
 Yet for a few short years an influence stirs,  
 A sense or wraith or essence of him dead,  
 Which makes insensate things its ministers  
 To those beloved, his spirit's daily bread;  
 Then that, too, fades; in book or deed a spark  
 Lingers, then that, too, fades; then all is dark.

## XXXI

So in the empty sky the stars appear,  
 Are bright in heaven marching through the sky,  
 Spinning their planets, each one to his year,  
 Tossing their fiery hair until they die;  
 Then in the tower afar the watcher sees  
 The sun, that burned, less noble than it was,  
 Less noble still, until by dim degrees  
 No spark of him is specklike in his glass.

Then blind and dark in heaven the sun proceeds,  
Vast, dead and hideous, knocking on his moons,  
Till crashing on his like creation breeds,  
Striking such life, a constellation swoons;  
From dead things striking fire a new sun springs,  
New fire, new life, new planets with new wings.

## XXXII

It may be so with us, that in the dark,  
When we have done with time and wander space,  
Some meeting of the blind may strike a spark,  
And to Death's empty mansion give a grace.  
It may be, that the loosened soul may find  
Some new delight of living without limbs,  
Bodiless joy of flesh-untrammelled mind,  
Peace like a sky where starlike spirit swims.  
It may be, that the million cells of sense,  
Loosed from their seventy years' adhesion, pass  
Each to some joy of changed experience,  
Weight in the earth or glory in the grass.  
It may be, that we cease; we cannot tell.  
Even if we cease, life is a miracle.

## XXXIII

WHAT am I, Life? A thing of watery salt  
Held in cohesion by unresting cells  
Which work they know not why, which never halt,  
Myself unwitting where their master dwells.  
I do not bid them, yet they toil, they spin:  
A world which uses me as I use them,  
Nor do I know which end or which begin,  
Nor which to praise, which pamper, which condemn.  
So, like a marvel in a marvel set,  
I answer to the vast, as wave by wave  
'The sea of air goes over, dry or wet,  
Or the full moon comes swimming from her cave,  
Or the great sun comes north, this myriad I  
Tingles, not knowing how, yet wondering why.

## XXXIV

IF I could get within this changing I,  
This ever altering thing which yet persists,  
Keeping the features it is reckoned by,  
While each component atom breaks or twists,  
If, wandering past strange groups of shifting forms,  
Cells at their hidden marvels hard at work,  
Pale from much toil, or red from sudden storms,  
I might attain to where the Rulers lurk.  
If, pressing past the guards in those grey gates,  
The brains most folded, intertwined shell,  
I might attain to that which alters fates,  
The King, the supreme self, the Master Cell;  
Then, on Man's earthly peak, I might behold  
The unearthly self beyond, unguessed, untold.

## XXXV

WHAT is the atom which contains the whole,  
This miracle which needs adjuncts so strange,  
This, which imagined God and is the soul,  
The steady star persisting amid change?  
What waste, that smallness of such power should need  
Such clumsy tools so easy to destroy,  
Such wasteful servants difficult to feed,  
Such indirect dark avenues to joy.  
Why, if its business is not mainly earth,  
Should it demand such heavy chains to sense?  
A heavenly thing demands a swifter birth,  
A quicker hand to act intelligence;  
An earthly thing were better like the rose,  
At peace with clay from which its beauty grows.

## XXXVI

AH, we are neither heaven nor earth, but men;  
Something that uses and despises both,  
That takes its earth's contentment in the pen,  
Then sees the world's injustice and is wroth,

And flinging off youth's happy promise, flies  
Up to some breach, despising earthly things,  
And, in contempt of hell and heaven, dies  
Rather than bear some yoke of priests or kings.  
Our joys are not of heaven nor earth, but man's,  
A woman's beauty, or a child's delight,  
The trembling blood when the discoverer scans  
The sought-for world, the guessed-at satellite;  
The ringing scene, the stone at point to blush  
For unborn men to look at and say "Hush."

## XXXVII

ROSES are beauty, but I never see  
Those blood drops from the burning heart of June  
Glowing like thought upon the living tree  
Without a pity that they die so soon,  
Die into petals, like those roses old,  
Those women, who were summer in men's hearts  
Before the smile upon the Sphinx was cold  
Or sand had hid the Syrian and his arts.  
O myriad dust of beauty that lies thick  
Under our feet that not a single grain  
But stirred and moved in beauty and was quick  
For one brief moon and died nor lived again;  
But when the moon rose lay upon the grass  
Pasture to living beauty, life that was.

## XXXVIII

OVER the church's door they moved a stone,  
And there, unguessed, forgotten, mortared up,  
Lay the priest's cell where he had lived alone.  
There was his ashy hearth, his drinking cup,  
There was his window whence he saw the Host,  
The God whose beauty quickened bread and wine,  
The skeleton of a religion lost,  
The ghostless bones of what had been divine.

O many a time the dusty masons come  
Knocking their trowels in the stony brain  
To cells where perished priests had once a home,  
Or where devout brows pressed the window pane,  
Watching the thing made God, the God whose bones  
Bind underground our soul's foundation stones.

## XXXIX

Our of the clouds come torrents, from the earth  
Fire and quakings, from the shrieking air  
Tempests that harry half the planet's girth.  
Death's unseen seeds are scattered everywhere.  
Yet in his iron cage the mind of man  
Measures and braves the terrors of all these.  
The blindest fury and the subtlest plan  
He turns, or tames, or shows in their degrees.  
Yet in himself are forces of like power,  
Untamed, unreckoned; seeds that brain to brain  
Pass across oceans bringing thought to flower,  
New worlds, new selves, where he can live again  
Eternal beauty's everlasting rose  
Which casts this world as shadow as it goes.

## XL

O LITTLE self, within whose smallness lies  
All that man was, and is, and will become,  
Atom unseen that comprehends the skies  
And tells the tracks by which the planets roam;  
That, without moving, knows the joys of wings,  
The tiger's strength, the eagle's secrecy,  
And in the hovel can consort with kings,  
Or clothe a God with his own mystery.  
O with what darkness do we cloak thy light,  
What dusty folly gather thee for food,  
Thou who alone art knowledge and delight,  
The heavenly bread, the beautiful, the good.  
O living self, O God, O morning star,  
Give us thy light, forgive us what we are.

## XLI

I WENT into the fields, but you were there  
Waiting for me, so all the summer flowers  
Were only glimpses of your starry powers;  
Beautiful and inspired dust they were.

I went down by the waters, and a bird  
Sang with your voice in all the unknown tones  
Of all that self of you I have not heard,  
So that my being felt you to the bones.

I went into the house, and shut the door  
To be alone, but you were there with me;  
All beauty in a little room may be,  
Though the roof lean and muddy be the floor.

Then in my bed I bound my tired eyes  
To make a darkness for my weary brain;  
But like a presence you were there again,  
Being and real, beautiful and wise,

So that I could not sleep, and cried aloud,  
"You strange grave thing, what is it you would say?"  
The redness of your dear lips dimmed to grey,  
The waters ebbed, the moon hid in a cloud.

## XLII

THIS is the living thing that cannot stir.  
Where the seed chances there it roots and grows,  
To suck what makes the lily or the fir  
Out of the earth and from the air that blows,  
Great power of Will that little thing the seed  
Has, all alone in earth, to plan the tree,  
And, though the mud oppresses, to succeed  
And put out branches where the birds may be.  
Then the wind blows it, but the bending boughs  
Exult like billows, and their million green  
Drink the all-living sunlight in carouse,  
Like dainty harts where forest wells are clean,  
While it, the central plant, which looks o'er miles,  
Draws milk from the earth's breast, and sways, and smiles.



## XLIII

HERE, where we stood together, we three men.  
Before the war had swept us to the East,  
Three thousand miles away, I stand agen  
And hear the bells, and breathe, and go to feast.  
We trod the same path, to the self-same place,  
Yet here I stand, having beheld their graves,  
Skyros whose shadows the great seas crase,  
And Sedd-el-Bahr that ever more blood craves.  
So, since we communed here, our bones have been  
Nearer, perhaps, than they again will be.  
Earth and the world-wide battle lie between,  
Death lies between, and friend-destroying sea.  
Yet here, a year ago, we talked and stood  
As I stand now, with pulses beating blood.

## XLIV

I SAW her like a shadow on the sky  
In the last light, a blur upon the sea;  
Then the gale's darkness put the shadow by.  
But from one grave that island talked to me;  
And in the midnight, in the breaking storm,  
I saw its blackness and a blinding light,  
And thought "So death obscures your gentle form,  
So memory strives to make the darkness bright;  
And, in that heap of rocks, your body lies,  
Part of the island till the planet ends,  
My gentle comrade, beautiful and wise,  
Part of this crag this bitter surge offends,  
While I, who pass, a little obscure thing,  
War with this force, and breathe, and am its king."

## XLV

LOOK at the grass, sucked by the seed from dust,  
Whose blood is the spring rain, whose food the sun,  
Whose life the scythe takes ere the sorrels rust,  
Whose stalk is chaff before the winter's done.

Even the grass its happy moment has  
In May, when glistening buttercups make gold;  
The exulting millions of the meadow-grass  
Give out a green thanksgiving from the mould.  
Even the blade that has not even a blossom  
Creates a mind, its joy's persistent soul  
Is a warm spirit on the old earth's bosom  
When April's fire has dwindled to a coal;  
The spirit of the grasses' joy makes fair  
The winter fields when even the wind goes bare.

## XLVI

THERE is no God, as I was taught in youth,  
Though each, according to his stature, builds  
Some covered shrine for what he thinks the truth,  
Which day by day his reddest heart-blood gilds.  
There is no God; but death, the clasp<sup>ing</sup> sea,  
In which we move like fish, deep over deep,  
Made of men's souls that bodies have set free,  
Floods to a Justice though it seems asleep.  
There is no God; but still, behind the veil,  
The hurt thing works, out of its agony.  
Still like the given cruse that did not fail  
Return the pennies given to passers-by.  
There is no God; but we, who breathe the air,  
Are God ourselves, and touch God everywhere.

## XLVII

WHEREVER beauty has been quick in clay  
Some effluence of it lives, a spirit dwells,  
Beauty that death can never take away  
Mixed with the air that shakes the flower bells;  
So that by waters where the apples fall,  
Or in lone glens, or valleys full of flowers,  
Or in the streets where bloody tidings call,  
The haunting waits the mood that makes it ours.

Then at a turn, a word, an act, a thought,  
 Such difference comes; the spirit apprehends  
 That place's glory; for where beauty fought  
 Under the veil the glory never ends;  
 But the still grass, the leaves, the trembling flower  
 Keep, through dead time, that everlasting hour.

## XLVIII

BEAUTY, let be; I cannot see your face,  
 I shall not know you now, nor touch your feet,  
 Only within me tremble to your grace,  
 Tasting this crumb vouchsafed which is so sweet.  
 Even when the full-leaved summer bore no fruit  
 You gave me this, this apple of man's tree;  
 This planet sings when other spheres were mute,  
 This light begins when darkness covered me.  
 Now, though I know that I shall never know  
 All, through my fault, nor blazon with my pen  
 That path prepared where only I could go,  
 Still, I have this, not given to other men:  
 Beauty, this grace, this spring, this given bread,  
 This life, this dawn, this wakening from the dead.

## XLIX

You are more beautiful than women are,  
 Wiser than men, stronger than ribbèd death,  
 Juster than Time, more constant than the star,  
 Dearer than love, more intimate than breath,  
 Having all art, all science, all control  
 Over the still unsmithied, even as Time  
 Cradles the generations of man's soul.  
 You are the light to guide, the way to climb.  
 So, having followed beauty, having bowed  
 To wisdom and to death, to law, to power,  
 I like a blind man stumble from the crowd  
 Into the darkness of a deeper hour,  
 Where in the lonely silence I may wait  
 The prayed-for gleam—your hand upon the gate.

## L

BEAUTY retires; the blood out of the earth  
Shrinks, the stalk dries, lifeless November still  
Drops the brown husk of April's greenest birth.  
Through the thinned beech clump I can see the hill.  
So withers man, and though his life renews  
In Aprils of the soul, an autumn comes  
Which gives an end, not respite, to the thews  
That bore his soul through the world's martyrdoms.  
Then all the beauty will be out of mind,  
Part of man's store, that lies outside his brain,  
Touch to the dead and vision to the blind,  
Drink in the desert, bread, eternal grain,  
Part of the untilled field that beauty sows  
With flowers untold, where quickened spirit goes.

## LI

Nor for the anguish suffered is the slur,  
Not for the woman's taunts, the mocks of men;  
No, but because you never welcomed her,  
Her of whose beauty I am only the pen.

There was a dog, dog-minded, with dog's eyes,  
Damned by a dog's brute-nature to be true.  
Something within her made his spirit wise;  
He licked her hand, he knew her; not so you.

When all adulterate beauty has gone by,  
When all inanimate matter has gone down,  
We will arise and walk, that dog and I,  
The only two who knew her in the town.

We'll range the pleasant mountain side by side,  
Seeking the blood-stained flowers where Christs have died.

## LII

BEAUTY was with me once, but now, grown old,  
I cannot hear nor see her: thus a King  
In the high turret kept him from the cold  
Over the fire with his magic ring,

Which, as he wrought, made pictures come and go  
 Of men and times, past, present, and to be;  
 Now like a smoke, now flame-like, now a glow,  
 Now dead, now bright, but always fantasy,  
 While, on the stair without, a faithful slave  
 Stabbed to the death, crawled bleeding, whispering, "Sir,  
 They come to kill you, fly: I come to save,  
 O you great gods, for pity let him hear."  
 Then, with his last strength tapped, and muttered, "Sire."  
 While the King smiled and drowsed above the fire.

## LIII

So beauty comes, so with a failing hand  
 She knocks, and cries, and fails to make me hear,  
 She who tells futures in the falling sand,  
 And still, by signs, makes hidden meanings clear;  
 She, who behind this many peopled smoke,  
 Moves in the light and struggles to direct,  
 Through the deaf ear and by the baffled stroke,  
 The wicked man, the honoured architect.  
 Yet at a dawn before the birds begin,  
 In dreams, as the horse stamps and the hound stirs,  
 Sleep slips the bolt and beauty enters in  
 Crying aloud those hurried words of hers,  
 And I awake and, in the birded dawn,  
 Know her for Queen, and own myself a pawn.

## LIV

You will remember me in days to come,  
 With love, or pride, or pity, or contempt,  
 So will my friends (not many friends, yet some),  
 When this my life will be a dream out-dreamt;  
 And one, remembering friendship by the fire,  
 And one, remembering love time in the dark,  
 And one, remembering unfulfilled desire,  
 Will sigh, perhaps, yet be beside the mark;  
 For this my body with its wandering ghost  
 Is nothing solely but an empty grange,  
 Dark in a night that owls inhabit most,  
 Yet when the King rides by there comes a change,  
 The windows gleam, the cresset's fiery hair  
 Blasts the blown branch and beauty lodges there.

## LV

IF Beauty be at all, if, beyond sense,  
There be a wisdom piercing into brains,  
Why should the glory wait on impotence,  
Biding its time till blood is in the veins?

There is no beauty, but, when thought is quick,  
Out of the noisy sickroom of ourselves  
Some flattery comes to try to cheat the sick,  
Some drowsy drug is groped for on the shelves.

There is no beauty, for we tread a scene  
Red to the eye with blood of living things;  
Thought is but joy from murder that has been,  
Life is but brute at war upon its kings.

There is no beauty, nor could beauty care  
For us, this dust, that men make everywhere.

## LVI

IF all be governed by the moving stars,  
If passing planets bring events to be,  
Searing the face of Time with bloody scars,  
Drawing men's souls even as the moon the sea,  
If as they pass they make a current pass  
Across man's life and heap it to a tide,  
We are but pawns, ignobler than the grass  
Cropped by the beast and crunched and tossed aside.  
Is all this beauty that doth inhabit heaven  
Train of a planet's fire? Is all this lust  
A chymic means by warring stars contriven  
To bring the violets out of Cæsar's dust?  
Better be grass, or in some hedge unknown  
The spilling rose whose beauty is its own.

## LVII

IN emptiest furthest heaven where no stars are,  
Perhaps some planet of our master sun  
Still rolls an unguessed orbit round its star,  
Unthought, unseen, unknown of anyone.

Roving dead space according to its law,  
Casting our light on burnt-out suns and blind,  
Singing in the frozen void its word of awe,  
One wandering thought in all that idiot mind,  
And, in some span of many a thousand year,  
Passing through heaven its influence may arouse  
Beauty unguessed in those who habit here,  
And men may rise with glory on their brows  
And feel new life like fire, and see the old  
Fall from them dead, the bronze's broken mould.

## LVIII

PERHAPS in chasms of the wasted past,  
That planet wandered within hail of ours,  
And plucked men's souls to loveliness and cast  
The old, that was, away, like husks of flowers;  
And made them stand erect and bade them build  
Nobler than hovels plaited in the mire,  
Gave them an altar and a God to gild,  
Bridled the brooks for them and fettered fire;  
And, in another coming, forged the steel  
Which, on life's scarlet wax, for ever set  
Longing for beauty bitten as a seal  
That blood not clogs nor centuries forget,  
That built Atlantis, and, in time, will raise  
That grander thing whose image haunts our days.

## LIX

FOR, like an outcast from the city, I  
Wander the desert strewn with travellers' bones,  
Having no comrade but the starry sky  
Where the tuned planets ride their floating thrones.  
I pass old ruins where the kings caroused  
In cups long shards from vines long since decayed,  
I tread the broken brick where queens were housed  
In beauty's time ere beauty was betrayed,

And in the ceaseless pitting of the sand  
On monolith and pyle, I see the dawn  
Making those skeletons of beauty grand  
By fire that comes as darkness is withdrawn,  
And, in that fire, the art of men to come  
Shines with such glow I bless my martyrdom.

## LX

DEATH lies in wait for you, you wild thing in the wood,  
Shy-footed beauty dear, half-seen, half-understood,  
Glimpsed in the beech-wood dim and in the dropping fir,  
Shy like a fawn and sweet and beauty's minister.  
Glimpsed as in flying clouds by night the little moon,  
A wonder, a delight, a paleness passing soon.

Only a moment held, only an hour seen,  
Only an instant known in all that life has been,  
One instant in the sand to drink that gush of grace,  
The beauty of your way, the marvel of your face.

Death lies in wait for you, but few short hours he gives;  
I perish even as you by whom all spirit lives.  
Come to me, spirit, come, and fill my hour of breath  
With hours of life in life that pay no toll to death.

## LXI

THEY called that broken hedge The Haunted Gate.  
Strange fires (they said) burnt there at moonless times.  
Evil was there, men never went there late,  
The darkness there was quick with threatened crimes.  
And then one digging in that bloodied clay  
Found, but a foot below, a rotted chest.  
Coins of the Romans, tray on rusted tray  
Hurriedly heaped there by a digger pressed.  
So that one knew how, centuries before,  
Some Roman flying from the sack by night,  
Digging in terror there to hide his store,  
Sweating his pick by windy lantern light,  
Had stamped his anguish on that place's soul,  
So that it knew and could rehearse the whole.



## LXII

THERE was an evil in the nodding wood  
Above the quarry long since overgrown,  
Something which stamped it as a place of blood  
Where tortured spirit cried from murdered bone.  
Then, after years, I saw a rusty knife  
Stuck in a woman's skull, just as 'twas found,  
Blackt with a centuried crust of clotted life,  
In the red clay of that unholy ground.  
So that I knew the unhappy thing had spoken,  
That tongueless thing for whom the quarry spoke,  
The evil seals of murder had been broken  
By the red earth, the grass, the rooted oak,  
The inarticulate dead had forced the spade,  
The hand, the mind, till murder was displayed.

## LXIII

Go, spend your penny, Beauty, when you will,  
In the grave's darkness let the stamp be lost.  
The water still will bubble from the hill,  
And April quick the meadows with her ghost;  
Over the grass the daffodils will shiver,  
The primroses with their pale beauty abound,  
The blackbird be a lover and make quiver  
With his glad singing the great soul of the ground;  
So that if the body rot, it will not matter;  
Up in the earth the great game will go on,  
The coming of spring and the running of the water,  
And the young things glad of the womb's darkness gone  
And the joy we felt will be a part of the glory  
In the lover's kiss that makes the old couple's story.

## LXIV

THOUGH in life's streets the tempting shops have lured  
Because all beauty, howsoever base,  
Is vision of you, ~~marred~~, I have endured,  
Tempted or fall'n, to look upon your face.

Now through the grinning death's-head in the paint,  
Within the tavern-song, hid in the wine,  
In many-kindred man, emperor and saint,  
I see you pass, you breath of the divine.  
I see you pass, as centuries ago  
The long dead men with passionate spirit saw.  
O brother man, whom spirit habits so,  
Through your red sorrows Beauty keeps her law,  
Beauty herself, who takes your dying hand,  
To leave through Time the Memnon in the sand.

## LXV

WHEN all these million cells that are my slaves  
Fall from my pourried ribs and leave me lone,  
A living speck among a world of graves,  
What shall I be, that spot in the unknown?  
A glow-worm in a night that floats the sun?  
Or deathless dust feeling the passer's foot?  
An eye undying mourning things undone?  
Or seed for quickening free from prisoning fruit?  
Or an eternal jewel on your robe,  
Caught to your heart, one with the April fire  
That made me yours as man upon the globe,  
One with the spring, a breath in all desire,  
One with the primrose, present in all joy?  
Or pash that rots, which pismires can destroy?

## LXVI

LET that which is to come be as it may,  
Darkness, extinction, justice, life intense,  
The flies are happy in the summer day,  
Flies will be happy many summers hence.  
Time with his antique breeds that built the Sphinx,  
Time with her men to come whose wings will tower,  
Poured and will pour, not as the wise man thinks,  
But with blind force, to each his little hour.  
And when the hour has struck, comes death or change,  
Which, whether good or ill we cannot tell,  
But the blind planet will wander through her range  
Bearing men like us who will serve as well.  
The sun will rise, the winds that ever move  
Will blow our dust that once were men in love.



*The Lyrics from*  
**GOOD FRIDAY**  
**A PLAY IN VERSE**



## GOOD FRIDAY

MADMAN.

They cut my face, there 's blood upon my brow.  
So, let it run, I am an old man now,  
An old, blind beggar picking filth for bread.  
Once I wore silk, drank wine,  
Spent gold on women, feasted, all was mine;  
But this uneasy current in my head  
Burst, one full moon, and cleansed me, then I saw  
Truth like a perfect crystal, life its flaw,  
I told the world, but I was mad, they said.  
I had a valley farm above a brook,  
My sheep bells there were sweet,  
And in the summer heat  
My mill wheels turned, yet all these things they took;  
Ah, and I gave them, all things I forsook  
But that green blade of wheat,  
My own soul's courage, that they did not take.  
I will go on, although my old heart ache.  
Not long, not long.  
Soon I shall pass behind  
This changing veil to that which does not change,  
My tired feet will range  
In some green valley of eternal mind  
Where Truth is daily like the water's song

The wild duck, stringing through the sky,  
Are south away.  
Their green necks glitter as they fly,  
The lake is gray.  
So still, so lone, the fowler never heeds.  
The wind goes rustle, rustle, through the reeds.

\* \* \* \* \*

There they find peace to have their own wild souls.  
 In that still lake,  
 Only the moonrise or the wind controls  
 The way they take,  
 Through the gray reeds, the cocking moor-hen's lair,  
 Rippling the pool, or over leagues of air.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Not thus, not thus are the wild souls of men.  
 No peace for those  
 Who step beyond the blindness of the pen  
 To where the skies unclose.  
 For them the spitting mob, the cross, the crown of thorns  
 The bull gone mad, the Saviour on his horns.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Beauty and peace have made,  
 No peace, no still retreat,  
 No solace, none.  
 Only the unafraid  
 Before life's roaring street  
 Touch Beauty's feet,  
 Know Truth, do as God bade,  
 Become God's son.

[*Pause.*]

Darkness, come down, cover a brave man's pain,  
 Let the bright soul go back to God again.  
 Cover that tortured flesh, it only serves  
 To hold that thing which other power nerves.  
 Darkness, come down, let it be midnight here,  
 In the dark night the untroubled soul sings clear.

[*It darkens.*]

I have been scourged, blinded and crucified,  
 My blood burns on the stones of every street  
 In every town; wherever people meet  
 I have been hounded down, in anguish died.

[*It darkens.*]

The creaking door of flesh rolls slowly back  
 Nerve by red nerve the links of living crack,  
 Loosing the soul to tread another track.

Beyond the pain, beyond the broken clay,  
 A glimmering country lies  
 Where life is being wise,  
 All of the beauty seen by truthful eyes  
 Are lilies there, growing beside the way.  
 Those golden ones will loose the torted hands,  
 Smooth the scarred brow, gather the breaking soul,  
 Whose earthly moments drop like falling sands  
 To leave the spirit whole.  
 Now darkness is upon the face of the earth.

Only a penny, a penny,  
 Lilies brighter than any,  
 Lilies whiter than snow.  
 Beautiful lilies grow  
 Wherever the truth so sweet  
 Has trodden with bloody feet,  
 Has stood with a bloody brow.  
 Friend, it is over now,  
 The passion, the sweat, the pains.  
 Only the truth remains.

\* \* \* \* \*

I cannot see what others see;  
 Wisdom alone is kind to me,  
 Wisdom that comes from Agony.

\* \* \* \* \*

Wisdom that lives in the pure skies,  
 The untouched star, the spirit's eyes:  
 O Beauty, touch me, make me wise.





REYNARD THE FOX  
OR  
THE GHOST HEATH RUN



REYNARD THE FOX  
OR  
THE GHOST HEATH RUN  
PART I

THE meet was at "The Cock and Pye  
By Charles and Martha Enderby,"  
The grey, three-hundred-year-old inn  
Long since the haunt of Benjamin  
The highwayman, who rode the bay.  
The tavern fronts the coaching way,  
The mail changed horses there of old.  
It has a strip of grassy mould  
In front of it, a broad green strip.  
A trough, where horses' muzzles dip,  
Stands opposite the tavern front,  
And there that morning came the hunt,  
To fill that quiet width of road  
As full of men as Framilode  
Is full of sea when tide is in.

The stables were alive with din  
From dawn until the time of meeting.  
A pad-groom gave a cloth a beating,  
Knocking the dust out with a stake.  
Two men cleaned stalls with fork and rake,  
And one went whistling to the pump,  
The handle whined, ker-lump, ker-lump,  
The water splashed into the pail,  
And, as he went, it left a trail,  
Lipped over on the yard's bricked paving.  
Two grooms (sent on before) were shaving  
There in the yard, at glasses propped  
On jutting bricks; they scraped and stropped,

## REYNARD THE FOX

ad felt their chins and leaned and peered,  
woodland day was what they feared  
As second horseman), shaving there.  
Then, in the stalls where hunters were,  
Straw rustled as the horses shifted,  
The hayseeds ticked and haystraws drifted  
From racks as horses tugged their feed.  
Slow gulping sounds of steady greed  
Came from each stall, and sometimes stampings,  
Whinnies (at well-known steps) and rampings,  
To see the horse in the next stall.

Outside, the spangled cock did call  
To scattering grain that Martha flung.  
And many a time a mop was wrung  
By Susan ere the floor was clean.  
The harness-room, that busy scene,  
Clinked and chinked from ostler's brightening  
Rings and bits with dips of whitening,  
Rubbing fox-flecks out of stirrups,  
Dumbing buckles of their chirrups  
By the touch of oily feathers.  
Some, with stag's bones rubbed at leathers,  
Brushed at saddle-flaps or hove  
Saddle-linings to the stove.  
Blue smoke from strong tobacco drifted  
Out of the yard, the passers sniff it,  
Mixed with the strong ammonia flavour  
Of horses' stables and the savour  
Of saddle-paste and polish spirit  
Which put the gleam on flap and tirrit.  
The grooms in shirts with rolled-up sleeves,  
Belted by girths of coloured weaves,  
Groomed the clipped hunters in their stalls.  
One said: "My dad cured saddle-galls,  
He called it Dr. Barton's cure—  
Hog's lard and borax, laid on pure."  
And others said: "Ge' back, my son."  
"Stand over, girl; now, girl, ha' done."  
"Now, boy, no snapping; gently. Crikes!  
He gives a rare pinch when he likes."

"Drawn blood? I thought he looked a biter."  
 "I give 'em all sweet spit of nitre  
 For that, myself: that sometimes cures."  
 "Now, Beauty, mind them feet of yours."  
 They groomed, and sissed with hissing notes  
 To keep the dust out of their throats.

\* \* \* \* \*

There came again and yet again  
 The feed-box lid, the swish of grain,  
 Or Joe's boots stamping in the loft,  
 The hay-fork's stab and then the soft  
 Hay's scratching slither down the shoot.  
 Then with a thud some horse's foot  
 Stamped, and the gulping munch again  
 Resumed its lippings at the grain.

\* \* \* \* \*

The road outside the inn was quiet  
 Save for the poor, mad, restless pyat  
 Hopping his hanging wicker-cage.  
 No calmative of sleep or sage  
 Will cure the fever to be free.  
 He shook the wicker ceaselessly  
 Now up, now down, but never out,  
 On wind-waves, being blown about,  
 Looking for dead things good to eat.  
 His cage was strewn with scattered wheat.

\* \* \* \* \*

At ten o'clock, the Doctor's lad  
 Brought up his master's hunting pad  
 And put him in a stall, and leaned  
 Against the stall, and sissed, and cleaned  
 The port and cannons of his curb.  
 He chewed a sprig of smelling herb.  
 He sometimes stopped, and spat, and chid  
 The silly things his master did.

\* \* \* \* \*

At twenty past, old Baldock strode  
 His ploughman's straddle down the road,  
 An old man with a gaunt, burr<sup>d</sup> face,  
 His eyes rapt back on some far place

Like some starved, half-mad saint in bliss  
 In God's world through the rags of this.  
 He leaned upon a stake of ash  
 Cut from a sapling: many a gash  
 Was in his old, full-skirted coat.  
 The twisted muscles in his throat  
 Moved, as he swallowed, like taut cord.  
 His oaken face was seamed and gored;  
 He halted by the inn and stared  
 On that far bliss, that place prepared,  
 Beyond his eyes, beyond his mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then Thomas Copp, of Cowfoot's Wynd,  
 Drove up; and stopped to take a glass.  
 "I hope they'll gallop on my grass,"  
 He said; "my little girl does sing  
 To see the red coats galloping.  
 It's good for grass, too, to be trodden  
 Except they poach it, where it's sodden."

\* \* \* \* \*

Then Billy Waldrist, from the Lynn,  
 With Jockey Hill, from Pitts, came in  
 And had a sip of gin and stout  
 To help the jockey's sweatings out.  
 "Rare day for scent," the jockey said.

A pony like a feather bed  
 On four short sticks, took place aside.  
 The little girl who rode astride  
 Watched everything with eyes that glowed  
 With glory in the horse she rode.

\

T.

Bel

\* \* \* \* \*

Gro. At half-past ten some lads on foot  
 One : Came to be beaters to a shoot  
 He cal. Of rabbits on the Warren Hill.  
 Hog's la. Rough sticks they had, and Hob and Jill,  
 And others 'ir ferrets, in a bag, and netting.  
 "Stand over," talked of dinner-beer and betting,  
 "Now, boy," jeered, at those who stood around.  
 He gives a r rolled their dogs upon the ground,

And teased them: "Rats," they cried, "go fetch!"  
 "Go seek, good Roxer; 'z bite, good betch.  
 What dinner-beer'll they give us, lad?  
 Sex quarts the lot last year we had.  
 They'd ought to give us seven this.  
 Seek, Susan; what a betch it is."

\* \* \* \* \*

A pommle cob came trotting up,  
 Round-bellied like a drinking-cup,  
 Bearing on back a pommle man,  
 Round-bellied like a drinking-can.  
 The clergyman from Condicote.  
 His face was scarlet from his trot,  
 His white hair bobbed about his head  
 As halos do round clergy dead.  
 He asked Tom Copp, "How long to wait?"  
 His loose mouth opened like a gate,  
 To pass the wagons of his speech.  
 He had a mighty voice to preach,  
 Though indolent in other matters.  
 He let his children go in tatters.

\* \* \* \* \*

His daughter Madge on foot, flush-cheeked  
 In broken hat and boots that leaked,  
 With bits of hay all over her,  
 Her plain face grinning at the stir  
 (A broad pale face, snub-nosed, with speckles  
 Of sandy eyebrows sprinkt with freckles),  
 Came after him and stood apart  
 Beside the darling of her heart,  
 Miss Hattie Dyce from Baydon Dean,  
 A big young fair one, chiselled clean  
 Brow, chin and nose, with great blue eyes  
 All innocence and sweet surprise,  
 And golden hair piled coil on coil,  
 Too beautiful for time to spoil.  
 They talked in undertones together—  
 Not of the hunting, nor the weather.

\* \* \* \* \*

Old Steven from Scratch Steven Place  
 (A white beard and a rosy face)



Came next on his stringhalt grey.  
 "I've come to see the hounds away,"  
 He said, "and ride a field or two.  
 We old have better things to do  
 Than breaking all our necks for fun."  
 He shone on people like the sun,  
 And on himself for shining so.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three men came riding in a row;  
 John Pym, a bull-man, quick to strike,  
 Gross and blunt-headed like a shrike,  
 Yet sweet-voiced as a piping flute;  
 Tom See, the trainer, from the Toot,  
 Red, with an angry, puzzled face  
 And mouth twitched upward out of place,  
 Sucking cheap grapes and spitting seeds;  
 And Stone, of Bartle's Cattle Feeds,  
 A man whose bulk of flesh and bone  
 Made people call him Twenty Stone.  
 He was the man who stood a pull  
 At Tencombe with the Jersey bull,  
 And brought the bull back to his stall.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some children ranged the tavern-wall,  
 Sucking their thumbs and staring hard;  
 Some grooms brought horses from the yard.  
 Jane Selbie said to Ellen Tranter,  
 "A lot on 'em come doggin', ant her?"  
 "A lot on 'em," said Ellen. "Look,  
 There'm Mr. Gaunt of Water's Hook.  
 They say he . . ." (whispered). "Law!" said Jane.  
 Gaunt flung his heel across the mane,  
 And slithered from his horse and stamped.  
 "Boots tight," he said, "my feet are cramped."

A loose-shod horse came clicking-clack;  
 Nick Wolvesey on a hired hack  
 Came tittup, like a cup and ball.  
 One saw the sun, moon, stars, and all  
 The great green earth 'twixt him and saddle;  
 Then Molly Wolvesey riding straddle,

Red as a rose with eyes like sparks;  
Two boys from college out for larks  
Hunted bright Molly for a smile,  
But were not worth their quarry's while.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two eye-glassed gunners dressed in tweed  
Came with a spaniel on a lead  
And waited for a fellow-gunner.

The parson's son, the famous runner,  
Came dressed to follow hounds on foot.  
His knees were red as yew-tree root  
From being bare, day in, day out.  
He wore a blazer, and a clout  
(His sweater's arms) tied round his neck.  
His football shorts had many a speck  
And splash of mud from many a fall  
Got as he picked the slippery ball  
Heeled out behind a breaking scrum.  
He grinned at people, but was dumb,  
Not like these lousy foreigners.  
The otter-hounds and harriers  
From Godstow to the Wye all knew him.

And with him came the stock which grew him,  
The parson and his sporting wife.  
She was a stout one, full of life,  
With red, quick, kindly, manly face.  
She held the knave, queen, king and ace,  
In every hand she played with men.  
She was no sister to the hen,  
But fierce and minded to be queen.  
She wore a coat and skirt of green,  
A waistcoat cut of hunting red,  
Her tiepin was a fox's head.

The parson was a manly one,  
His jolly eyes were bright with fun  
His jolly mouth was well inclined  
To cry aloud his jolly mind  
To everyone, in jolly terms.  
He did not talk of churchyard worms,

But of our privilege as dust  
 To box a lively bout with lust  
 Ere going to heaven to rejoice.  
 He loved the sound of his own voice,  
 His talk was like a charge of horse,  
 His build was all compact, for force,  
 Well-knit, well-made, well-coloured, eager.  
 He kept no Lent to make him meagre,  
 He loved his God, himself and man,  
 He never said, "Life's wretched span;  
 This wicked world," in any sermon.  
 This body that we feed the worm on,  
 To him, was jovial stuff that thrilled.  
 He liked to see the foxes killed;  
 But most he felt himself in clover  
 To hear, "Hen left, hare right, cock over,"  
 At woodside, when the leaves are brown.  
 Some grey cathedral in a town  
 Where drowsy bells toll out the time  
 To shaven closes sweet with lime,  
 And wallflower roots rive out the mortar  
 All summer on the Norman dortar  
 Was certain some day to be his;  
 Nor would a mitre go amiss  
 To him, because he governed well.  
 His voice was like the tenor bell  
 When services were said and sung,  
 And he had read in many a tongue,  
 Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish, Greek.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two bright young women, nothing meek,  
 Rode up on bicycles and propped  
 Their wheels in such wise that they dropped  
 To bring the parson's son to aid.  
 Their cycling suits were tailor-made,  
 Smart, mannish, pert, but feminine.  
 The colour and the zest of wine  
 Were in their presence and their bearing;  
 Like spring, they brought the thought of pairing,  
 The parson's lady thought them pert.  
 And they could mock a man and flirt,

Do billiard tricks with corks and pennies,  
Sing ragtime songs and win at tennis  
The silver cigarette-case prize.  
They had good colour and bright eyes,  
Bright hair, bright teeth and pretty skin,  
Which many lads had longed to win  
On darkened stairways after dances.  
Their reading was the last romances,  
And they were dashing hockey players.  
Men called them "Jill and Joan, the slayers."  
They were as bright as fresh sweet-peas.

Old Farmer Bennett followed these  
Upon his big-boned savage black,  
Whose mule-teeth yellowed to bite back  
Whatever came within his reach.  
Old Bennett sat him like a leech,  
The grim old rider seemed to be  
As hard about the mouth as he.

\* \* \* \*

The beaters nudged each other's ribs  
With "There he goes, his bloody Nibs.  
He come on Joe and Anty Cop  
And beat 'em with his hunting-crop  
Like tho' they'd bin a sack of beans.  
His pickers were a pack of queans,  
And Joe and Anty took a couple.  
He caught 'em there, and banged 'em supple.  
Women and men, he didn't care  
(He'd kill 'em some day, if he dare),  
He beat the whole four nearly dead:  
'I'll learn 'ee rabbit in my shed;  
That 's how my ricks get set afire.'"  
That 's what he said, the bloody liar;  
Old oaf! I'd like to burn his ricks,  
Th' old swine 's too free with fists and sticks.  
He keeps that Mrs. Jones himself."

\* \* \* \*

Just like an axehead on its helve  
Old Bennett sat and watched the gathering.  
He'd given many a man a lathering

In field or barn, and women too.  
 His cold eye reached the women through  
 With comment, and the men with scorn.  
 He hated women gently born,  
 He hated all beyond his grasp,  
 For he was minded like the asp,  
 That strikes whatever is not dust.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charles Copse, of Copse Hold Manor, thrust  
 Next into view. In face and limb  
 The beauty and the grace of him  
 Were like the Golden Age returned.  
 His grave eyes steadily discerned  
 The good in men and what was wise.  
 He had deep blue, mild-coloured eyes  
 And shocks of harvest-coloured hair  
 Still beautiful with youth. An air  
 Or power of kindness went about him;  
 No heart of youth could ever doubt him  
 Or fail to follow where he led.  
 He was a genius, simply bred,  
 And quite unconscious of his power.  
 He was the very red rose flower  
 Of all that coloured countryside.  
 Gauchos had taught him how to ride.  
 He knew all arts, but practised most  
 The art of bettering flesh and ghost  
 In men and lads down in the mud.  
 He knew no class in flesh and blood.  
 He loved his kind. He spent some pith,  
 Long since, relieving Ladysmith.  
 Many a horse he trotted tame  
 Heading commandos from their aim  
 In those old days upon the veldt.

\* \* \* \* \*

An old bear in a scarlet pelt  
 Came next, old Squire Harridew,  
 His eyebrows gave a man the grue,  
 So bushy and so fierce they were;  
 He had a bitter tongue to swear.

A fierce, hot, hard, old, stupid squire,  
With all his liver made of fire,  
Small brain, great courage, mulish will.  
The hearts in all his house stood still  
When someone crossed the Squire's path.  
For he was terrible in wrath,  
And smashed whatever came to hand.  
Two things he failed to understand,  
The foreigner and what was new.

His daughters, Carrie, Jane and Lou,  
Rode with him, Carrie at his side.  
His son, the ne'er-do-weel, had died  
In Arizona long before.  
The Squire set the greatest store  
By Carrie, youngest of the three,  
And lovely to the blood was she;  
Blonde, with a face of blush and cream,  
And eyes deep violet in their gleam,  
Bright blue when quiet in repose,  
She was a very golden rose.  
And many a man when sunset came  
Would see the manor windows flame,  
And think, "My beauty's home is there."  
Queen Helen had less golden hair,  
Queen Cleopatra paler lips,  
Queen Blanche's eyes were in eclipse  
By golden Carrie's glancing by.  
She had a wit for mockery  
And sang mild, pretty, senseless songs  
Of sunsets, Heav'n and lovers' wrongs,  
Sweet to the Squire when he had dined.  
A rosebud need not have a mind.  
A lily is not sweet from learning.

\* \* \* \*

Jane looked like a dark-lantern, burning,  
Outwardly dark, unkempt, uncouth,  
But minded like the living truth,  
A friend that nothing shook nor wearied.  
She was not "Darling Jane'd" nor "Dearie'd."

She was all prickles to the touch,  
 So sharp that many feared to clutch,  
 So keen that many thought her bitter.  
 She let the little sparrows twitter.  
 She had a hard, ungracious way.  
 Her storm of hair was iron-grey,  
 And she was passionate in her heart  
 For women's souls that burn apart,  
 Just as her mother's had, with Squire.  
 She gave the sense of smouldering fire.  
 She was not happy being a maid,  
 At home, with Squire, but she stayed,  
 Enduring life, however bleak,  
 To guard her sisters, who were weak,  
 And force a life for them from Squire.  
 And she had roused and stood his fire  
 A hundred times, and earned his hate,  
 To win those two a better state.  
 Long years before the Canon's son  
 Had cared for her, but he had gone  
 To Klondyke, to the mines, for gold,  
 To find, in some strange way untold,  
 A foreign grave that no men knew.

\* \* \* \*

No depth, nor beauty, was in Loy,  
 But charm and fun, for she was merry,  
 Round, sweet and little, like a cherry,  
 With laughter like a robin's singing;  
 She was not kitten-like and clinging,  
 But pert and arch and fond of flirting,  
 In mocking ways that were not hurting,  
 And merry ways that women pardoned.  
 Not being married yet she gardened.  
 She loved sweet music; she would sing  
 Songs made before the German King  
 Made England German in her mind.  
 She sang "My Lady is unkind,"  
 "The Hunt is up," and those sweet things  
 Which Thomas Campion set to strings,  
 "Thrice toss," and "What," and "Where are now?"

\* \* \* \*

The next to come was Major Howe  
 Driv'n in a dog-cart by a groom.  
 The testy major was in fume  
 To find no hunter standing waiting;  
 The groom who drove him caught a rating,  
 The groom who had the horse in stable  
 Was damned in half the tongues of Babel,  
 The Major being hot and heady  
 When horse or dinner was not ready.  
 He was a lean, tough, liverish fellow,  
 With pale blue eyes (the whites pale yellow),  
 Moustache clipped toothbrush-wise, and jaws  
 Shaved bluish like old partridge claws.  
 When he had stripped his coat he made  
 A speckless presence for parade,  
 New pink, white cords, and glossy tops,  
 New gloves, the newest thing in crops,  
 Worn with an air that well expressed  
 His sense that no one else was dressed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Quick trotting after Major Howe  
 Came Doctor Frome of Quickemshow,  
 A smiling silent man whose brain  
 Knew all of every secret pain  
 In every man and woman there.  
 Their inmost lives were all laid bare  
 To him, because he touched their lives  
 When strong emotions sharp as knives  
 Brought out what sort of soul each was. ✓  
 As secret as the graveyard grass  
 He was, as he had need to be.  
 At some time he had had to see  
 Each person there, sans clothes, sans mask,  
 Sans lying even, when to ask  
 Probed a tamed spirit into truth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Richard, his son, a jolly youth,  
 Rode with him, fresh from Thomas's,  
 As merry as a yearling is  
 In May-time in a clover patch,  
 He was a gallant chick to hatch,



# REYNARD THE FOX

Big, brown and smiling, blithe and kind,  
 With ail his father's love of mind  
 And greater force to give it act.  
 To see him when the scrum was packed,  
 Heave, playing forward, was a sight.  
 His tackling was the crowd's delight  
 In many a danger close to goal.  
 The pride in the three-quarter's soul  
 Dropped, like a wet rag, when he collared.  
 He was as steady as a bollard,  
 And gallant as a skysail yard,  
 He rode a chestnut mare which sparred.  
 In good St. Thomas' Hospital  
 He was the crown imperial  
 Of all the scholars of his year.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Harold lads, from Tencombe Weir,  
 Came all on foot in corduroys,  
 Poor widowed Mrs. Harold's boys,  
 Dick, Hal and Charles, whose father died.  
 (Will Masemore shot him in the side  
 By accident at Masemore Farm.  
 A hazel knocked Will Masemore's arm  
 In getting through a hedge; his gun  
 Was not half-cocked, so it was done,  
 And those three boys left fatherless.)  
 Their gaitered legs were in a mess  
 With good red mud from twenty ditches,  
 Hal's face was plastered like his breeches.  
 Dick chewed a twig of juniper.  
 They kept at distance from the stir,  
 Their loss had made them lads apart.

\* \* \* \* \*

Next came the Colways' pony-cart  
 From Coln St. Evelyn's with the party.  
 Hugh Colway, jovial, bold and hearty,  
 And Polly Colway's brother, John  
 (Their horses had been both sent on),  
 And Polly Colway drove them there.  
 Poor pretty Polly Colway's hair!

The grey mare killed her at the brook  
Down seven springs mead at Water Hook  
Just one month later, poor sweet woman.  
Her brother was a rat-faced Roman,  
Lean, puckered, tight-skinned from the sea,  
Commander in the *Canace*,  
Able to drive a horse, or ship,  
Or crew of men without a whip  
By will, as long as they could go.  
His face would wrinkle, row on row,  
From mouth to hair-roots when he laughed,  
He looked ahead as though his craft  
Were with him still, in dangerous channels.  
He and Hugh Colway tossed their flannels  
Into the pony-cart and mounted.  
Six foiled attempts the watchers counted,  
The horses being bickering things  
That so much scarlet made like kings,  
Such sidling and such pawing and shifting.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Hugh was up his mare went drifting  
Sidelong and feeling with her heels  
For horses' legs and poshay wheels,  
While lather creamed her neat clipped skin.  
Hugh guessed her foibles with a grin.  
He was a rich town-merchant's son,  
A wise and kind man, fond of fun,  
Who loved to have a troop of friends  
At Coln St. Eves for all week-ends,  
And troops of children in for tea.  
He gloried in a Christmas-tree.  
And Polly was his heart's best treasure,  
And Polly was a golden pleasure  
To everyone, to see or hear.

\* \* \* \* \*

Poor Polly's dying struck him queer,  
He was a darkened man thereafter,  
Cowed, silent, he would wince at laughter  
And be so gentle it was strange  
Even to see. Life loves to chagge.

Now Coln St. Evelyn's hearths are cold,  
 The shutters up, the hunters sold,  
 And green mould damps the locked front door,  
 But this was still a month before,  
 And Polly, golden in the chaise,  
 Still smiled, and there were golden days,  
 Still thirty days, for those dear lovers.

The Riddens came, from Ocle Covers,  
 Bill Ridden riding Stormalong  
 (By Tempest out of Love-me-Long),  
 A proper handful of a horse  
 That nothing but the Aintree course  
 Could bring to terms, save Bill perhaps.  
 All sport, from bloody war to scraps,  
 Came well to Bill, that big-mouthed smiler.  
 They nicknamed him "the mug-beguiler,"  
 For Billy lived too much with horses,  
 In copers' yards and sharpers' courses,  
 To lack the sharper-coper streak.  
 He did not turn the other cheek  
 When struck (as English Christians do);  
 He boxed like a Whitechapel Jew,  
 And many a time his knuckles bled  
 Against a racecourse-gipsy's head.  
 For "hit him first and argue later"  
 Was truth at Billy's Alma Mater,  
 Not love, not any bosh of love.  
 His hand was like a chamois glove,  
 And riding was his chief delight.  
 He bred the chaser Chinese-White  
 From Lilybud by Mandarin.  
 And when his mouth tucked corners in,  
 And scent was high and hounds were going,  
 He went across a field like snowing  
 And tackled anything that came.

\* \* \* \*

His wife, Sal Ridden, was the same,  
 A loud, bold, bonde, abundant mare  
 With white horse-teeth and stooks of hair

(Like polished brass) and such a manner  
It flaunted from her like a banner.  
Her father was Tom See the trainer.  
She rode a lovely earth-disdainer  
Which she and Billy wished to sell.

Behind them rode her daughter Belle,  
A strange, shy, lovely girl, whose face  
Was sweet with thought and proud with race,  
And bright with joy at riding there.  
She was as good as blowing air,  
But shy and difficult to know.  
The kittens in the barley-mow,  
The setter's toothless puppies sprawling,  
The blackbird in the apple calling,  
All knew her spirit more than we.  
So delicate these maidens be  
In loving lovely helpless things.

The Manor set, from Tencombe Rings,  
Came with two friends, a set of six.  
Ed Manor with his cockerel chicks,  
Nob, Cob and Bunny, as they called them  
(God help the school or rule which galled them;  
They carried head), and friends from town.  
Ed Manor trained on Tencombe Down,  
He once had been a famous bat;  
He had that stroke, "the Manor-pat,"  
Which snicked the ball for three, past cover.  
He once scored twenty in an over.  
But now he cricketed no more.  
He purpled in the face and swore  
At all three sons, and trained, and told  
Long tales of cricketing of old,  
When he alone had saved his side,  
Drink made it doubtful if he lied.  
Drink purpled him, he could not face  
The fences now, nor go the pace  
He brought his friends to meet; no more.

His big son Nob, at whom he swore,  
 Swore back at him, for Nob was surly,  
 Tall, shifty, sullen-smiling, burly,  
 Quite fearless, built with such a jaw  
 That no man's rule could be his law  
 Nor any woman's son his master.  
 Boxing he relished. He could plaster  
 All those who boxed out Tencombe way.  
 A front tooth had been knocked away  
 Two days before, which put his mouth  
 A little to the east of south,  
 And put a venom in his laughter. /

\* \* \* \*

Cob was a lighter lad, but dafter,  
 Just past eighteen, while Nob was twenty,  
 Nob had no nerves but Cob had plenty,  
 So Cobby went where Nobby led.  
 He had no brains inside his head,  
 Was fearless, just like Nob, but put  
 Some clog of folly round his foot,  
 Where Nob put will of force or fraud.  
 He spat aside and muttered Gawd  
 When vext; he took to whisky kindly  
 And loved and followed Nobby blindly,  
 And rode as in the saddle born.

\* \* \* \*

Bun looked upon the two with scorn.  
 He was the youngest, and was wise.  
 He too was fair, with sullen eyes,  
 He too (a year before) had had  
 A zest for going to the bad,  
 With Cob and Nob. He knew the joys  
 Of drinking with the stable-boys,  
 Or smoking while he filled his skin  
 With pints of Guinness dashed with gin  
 And Cobby yelled a bawdy ditty,  
 Or cutting Nobby for the kitty,  
 And damning people's eyes and guts,  
 Or drawing evening-church for sluts;  
 He knew them all and now was quit.

Sweet Polly Colway managed it  
And Bunny changed. He dropped his drink  
(The pleasant pit's seductive brink),  
He started working in the stable,  
And well, for he was shrewd and able.  
He left the doubtful female friends  
Picked up at Evening-Service ends,  
He gave up cards and swore no more.  
Nob called him "the Reforming Whore,"  
"The Soul's Awakening," or "The Text,"  
Nob being always coarse when vexed.

Ed Manor's friends were Hawke and Sladd,  
Old college friends, the last he had,  
Rare horsemen, but their nerves were shaken  
By all the whisky they had taken.  
Hawke's hand was trembling on his rein.  
His eyes were dead-blue like a vein,  
His peaked, sad face was touched with breeding,  
His querulous mind was quaint from reading,  
His piping voice still quirked with fun.  
Many a mad thing he had done,  
Riding to hounds and going to races.  
A glimmer of the gambler's graces,  
Wit, courage, devil, touched his talk.

Sladd's big fat face was white as chalk,  
His mind went wandering, swift yet solemn,  
Twixt winning post and betting-column,  
The weights and forms and likely colts.  
He said, "This road is full of jolts.  
I shall be seasick riding here.  
Oh, damn last night with that liqueur!"

Len Stokes rode up on Peterkin;  
He owned the downs by Baydon Whin;  
(And grazed some thousand sheep: the boy  
Grinned round at men with jolly joy  
At being alive and being there.)  
His big round face and mop of hair

Shone, his great teeth shone in his grin.  
The clean blood in his clear tanned skin  
Ran merry, and his great voice mocked  
His young friends present till they rocked.

Steer Harpit came from Rowell Hill,  
A small, frail man, all heart and will,  
A sailor, as his voice betrayed.  
He let his whip-thong droop and played  
At snicking off the grass-blades with it.  
John Hankerton, from Compton Lythitt,  
Was there with Pity Hankerton,  
And Mike, their good-for-little son,  
Back, smiling, from his seventh job.  
Joan Urch was there upon her cob,  
Tom Sparsholt on his lanky grey,  
John Restrop from Hope Goneaway,  
And Vaughan, the big black handsome devil,  
Loose-lipped with song and wine and revel,  
All rosy from his morning tub.

The Godsdown tigress with her cub  
(Lady and Tommy Crowmarsh) came.  
The great eyes smouldered in the dame,  
Wit glittered, too, which few men saw.  
There was more beauty there than claw.  
Tommy in bearing, horse and dress,  
Was black, fastidious handsomeness,  
Choice to his trimmed soul's finger-tips,  
Heredia's sonnets on his lips.  
A line undrawn, a plate not bitten,  
A stone uncut, a phrase unwritten  
That would be perfect, made his mind.  
A choice pull from a rare print, signed,  
Was Tommy. He collected plate  
(Old Sheffield), and he owned each state  
Of all the Meryon Paris etchings.  
Colonel Sir Button Budd of Fletchings  
Was there; Long Robert Thrupp was there  
(Three yards of him men said there were),

Long as the King of Prussia's fancy.  
 He rode the long-legged Necromancy,  
 A useless racehorse that could canter.  
 George Childrey with his jolly banter  
 Was there, Nick Childrey, too, come down  
 The night before from London town  
 To hunt and have his lungs blown clean.  
 The Ilsley set from Tuttocks Green  
 Was there (old Henry Ilsley drove).  
 Carlotta Ilsley brought her love,  
 A flop-jowled broker from the city.  
 Men pitied her, for she was pretty.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some grooms and second horsemen mustered.  
 A lot of men on foot were clustered  
 Round the inn-door all busy drinking,  
 One heard the kissing glasses clinking  
 In passage as the tray was brought.  
 Two terriers (which they had there) fought  
 There on the green, a loud, wild whirl.  
 Bell stopped them like a gallant girl.  
 The hens behind the tavern clucked.

Then on a horse which bit and bucked  
 (The half-broke four-year-old Marauder)  
 Came Minton-Price of th' Afghan border,  
 Lean, puckered, yellowed, knotted, scarred,  
 Tough as a hide-rope twisted hard,  
 Tense tiger-sinew knit to bone.  
 Strange-wayed from having lived alone  
 With Kafir, Afghan and Beloosh,  
 In stations frozen in the Koosh  
 Where nothing but the bullet sings.  
 His mind had conquered many things—  
 Painting, mechanics, physics, law.  
 White-hot, hand-beaten things to draw  
 Self-hammered from his own soul's stithy.  
 His speech was blacksmith-sparked and pithy.  
 Danger had been his brother bred;  
 The stones had often been his bed  
 In bickers with the border-thieve.

\* \* \* \* \*



A chestnut mare with swerves and heaves  
 Came plunging, scattered all the crowd,  
 She tossed her head and laughed aloud  
 And bickered sideways past the meet.  
 From pricking ears to mincing feet  
 She was all tense with blood and quiver,  
 You saw her clipt hide twitch and shiver  
 Over her netted cords of veins.  
 She carried Cothill, of the Sleins,  
 A tall, black, bright-eyed, handsome lad.  
 Great power and great grace he had.  
 Men hoped the greatest things of him.  
 His grace made people think him slim,  
 But he was muscled like a horse,  
 A sculptor would have wrought his torse  
 In bronze or marble for Apollo.  
 He loved to hurry like a swallow  
 For miles on miles of short-grassed sweet,  
 Blue, hare-belled downs where dewy feet  
 Of pure winds hurry ceaselessly.  
 He loved the downland like a sea.  
 The downland where the kestrels hover—  
 The downland had him for a lover.

\* \* \* \* \*

And every other thing he loved  
 In which a clean free spirit moved.

\* \* \* \* \*

So beautiful he was, so bright,  
 He looked to men like young delight  
 Gone courting April maidenhood,  
 That has the primrose in her blood,  
 He on his mincing lady mare.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ock Gurney and old Pete were there  
 Riding their bonny cobs and swearing,  
 Ock's wife had giv'n them both a fairing,  
 A horse-rotte red, white and blue.  
 Their cheeks were brown as any brew,

And every comer to the meet  
Said, "Hello, Ock," or "Morning, Pete,  
Be you a-going to a wedding?"  
"Why, noa," they said, "we'm going a-bedding,  
Now ben't us, uncle, ben't us, Ock?"

Pete Gurney was a lusty cock  
Turned sixty-three, but bright and hale,  
A dairy-farmer in the vale,  
Much like a robin in the face,  
Much character in little space,  
With little eyes like burning coal;  
His mouth was like a slit or hole  
In leather that was seamed and lined.  
He had the russet-apple mind  
That betters as the weather worsen.  
He was a manly English person,  
Kind to the core, brave, merry, true.  
One grief he had, a grief still new,  
That former Parson joined with Squire  
In putting down the Playing Quire  
In church, and putting organ in.  
"Ah, boys, that was a pious din,  
That Quire was; a pious praise  
The noise was that we used to raise,  
I and my serpent, George with his'n,  
On Easter Day in 'He is risen,'  
Or blessed Christmas in 'Venite.'  
And how the trombone came in mighty  
In Alleluias from the heart!  
Pious, for each man played his part,  
Not like 'tis now." Thus he, still sore  
For changes forty years before  
When all (that could) in time and tune  
Blew trumpets to the newē moon.  
He was a bachelor from choice.  
He and his nephew farmed the Boyce  
Prime pasture-land for thirty cows  
Ock's wife, Selina Jane, kept house,  
And jolly were the three together.

Ock had a face like summer weather,  
 A broad red sun, split by a smile.  
 He mopped his forehead all the while  
 And said "By damn," and "Ben't us, Unk?"  
 His eyes were close and deeply sunk.  
 He cursed his hunter like a lover:  
 "Now blast your soul, my dear, give over.  
 Woa, now, my pretty, damn your eyes."  
 Like Pete, he was of middle size,  
 Dean-oak-like, stuggy, strong in shoulder.  
 He stood a wrestle like a boulder,  
 He had a back for pitching hay.  
 His singing voice was like a bay.  
 In talk he had a sideways spit,  
 Each minute to refresh his wit.  
 He cracked Brazil-nuts with his teeth.  
 He challenged Cobbet of the Heath  
 (Weight-lifting champion) once, but lost.  
 Hunting was what he loved the most  
 Next to his wife and Uncle Pete.  
 With beer to drink and cheese to eat  
 And rain in May to fill the grasses,  
 This life was not a dream that passes  
 To Ock, but like the summer flower.

\* \* \* \* \*

But now the clock had struck the hour,  
 And round the corner down the road  
 The bob-bob-bobbing serpent flowed  
 With three black knobs upon its spine,  
 Three bobbing black caps in a line.  
 A glimpse of scarlet at the gap  
 Showed underneath each bobbing cap,  
 And at the corner by the gate  
 One heard Tom Dansey give a rate:  
 "Hey, drop it, Jumper; have a care!"  
 There came a growl, half-rate, half-swear  
 A spitting crack, a tuneful whimper  
 And sweet religion entered Jumper.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a general turn of faces,  
 The men and horses shifted places,

And round the corner came the Hunt,  
 Those feathery things, the hounds, in front.  
 Intent, wise, dipping, trotting, straying,  
 Smiling at people, shoving, playing,  
 Nosing to children's faces, waving  
 Their feathery sterns, and all behaving,  
 One eye to Dansey on Maroon.  
 Their padding cat-feet beat a tune,  
 And though they trotted up so quiet  
 Their noses brought them news of riot,  
 Wild smells of things with living blood,  
 Hot smells, against the grippers good,  
 Of weasel, rabbit, cat and hare,  
 Whose feet had been before them there,  
 Whose taint still tingled every breath;  
 But Dansey on Maroon was death,  
 So, though their noses roved, their feet  
 Larked and trit-trotted to the meet.

\* \* \* \*

Bill Tall and Ell and Mirtie Key  
 (Aged fourteen years between the three)  
 Were flooded by them at the bend,  
 They thought their little lives would end;  
 The grave, sweet eyes looked into theirs,  
 Cold noses came, and clean short hairs,  
 And tails all crumpled up like ferns,  
 A sea of moving heads and sterns,  
 All round them, brushing coat and dress,  
 One paused, expecting a caress.  
 The children shrank into each other,  
 Shut eyes, clutched tight, and shouted "Mother!"  
 With mouths wide open, catching tears.

/ \* \* \* \*

Sharp Mrs. Tall allayed their fears,  
 "Err out the road, the dogs won't hurt 'ee.  
 There now, you've cried your faces dirty.  
 More cleaning up for me to do.  
 What? Cry at dogs, great lumps like you?"  
 She licked her handkerchief and smeared  
 Their faces where the dirt appeared.

\* \* \* \*

The hunt trit-trotted to the meeting,  
 Tom Dansey touching cap to greeting,  
 Slow lifting crop-thong to the rim,  
 No hunter there got more from him  
 Except some brightening of the eye  
 He halted at the Cock and Pye,  
 The hounds drew round him on the green,  
 Arrogant, Daffodil and Queen,  
 Closest, but all in little space.  
 Some lolled their tongues, some made grimace,  
 Yawning, or tilting nose in quest,  
 All stood and looked about with zest,  
 They were uneasy as they waited.  
 Their sires and dams had been well-mated,  
 They were a lovely pack for looks.  
 Their forelegs drumsticked without crooks,  
 Straight, without over-tread or bend,  
 Muscled to gallop to the end,  
 With neat feet round as any cat's.  
 Great-chested, muscled in the slats,  
 Bright, clean, short-coated, broad in shoulder,  
 With stag-like eyes that seemed to smoulder.  
 The heads well-cocked, the clean necks strong,  
 Brows broad, ears close, the muzzles long,  
 And all like racers in the thighs;  
 Their noses exquisitely wise,  
 Their minds being memories of smells;  
 Their voice like a ring of bells;  
 Their sterns all spirit, cock and feather;  
 Their colours like the English weather,  
 Magpie and hare, and badger-pye,  
 Like minglings in a double dye,  
 Some smutty-nosed, some tan, none bald;  
 Their manners were to come when called,  
 Their flesh was sinew knit to bone,  
 Their courage like a banner blown.  
 Their joy to push him out of cover,  
 And hunt him till they rolled him over.  
 They were as game as Robert Dover.

\* \* \* \*

Tom Dansey was a famous whip,  
 Trained as a child in horsemanship,

Entered, as soon as he was able,  
 As boy at Caunter's racing-stable;  
 There, like the other boys, he slept  
 In stall beside the horse he kept,  
 Snug in the straw; and Caunter's stick  
 Brought morning to him all too quick.  
 He learned the high, quick gingery ways  
 Of thoroughbreds; his stable days  
 Made him a rider, groom and vet.  
 He promised to be too thick-set  
 For jockeying, so left it soon.  
 Now he was whip and rode Maroon.  
 He was a small, lean, wiry man,  
 With sunk cheeks weathered to a tan  
 Scarred by the spikes of hawthorn spravs  
 Dashed thro' head down, on going days,  
 In haste to see the line they took.  
 There was a beauty in his look,  
 It was intent. His speech was plain.  
 Maroon's head, reaching to the rein,  
 Had half his thought before he spoke.  
 His "Gone away," when foxes broke  
 Was like a bell. (His chief delight  
 Was hunting fox from noon to night.)  
 His pleasure lay in hounds and horses:  
 He loved the Seven Springs water-courses,  
 Those flashing brooks (in good sound grass,  
 Where scent would hang like breath on glass).  
 He loved the English countryside:  
 The wine-leaved bramble in the ride,  
 The lichen on the apple-trees,  
 The poultry ranging on the lees,  
 The farms, the moist earth-smelling cover,  
 His wife's green grave at Mitcheldover,  
 Where snowdrops pushed at the first thaw.  
 Under his hide his heart was raw  
 With joy and pity of these things.

\* \* \* \* \*

The second whip was Kitty Myngs,  
 Still but a lad but kern and quick  
 (Son of old Myngs, who farmed the Wick),

A horse-mouthed lad who knew his work;  
 He rode the big black horse, the Turk.  
 And longed to be a huntsman bold.  
 He had the horse-look, sharp and old,  
 With much good-nature in his face.  
 His passion was to go the pace,  
 His blood was crying for a taming.  
 He was the Devil's chick for gaming,  
 He was a rare good lad to box.  
 He sometimes had a main of cocks  
 Down at the Flags. His job with hounds  
 At present kept his blood in bounds  
 From rioting and running hare.  
 Tom Dansey made him have a care.  
 He worshipped Dansey heart and soul.  
 To be a huntsman was his goal;  
 To be with hounds, to charge full tilt  
 Blackthorns that made the gentry wilt  
 Was his ambition and his hope.  
 He was a hot colt needing rope,  
 He was too quick to speak his passion  
 To suit his present huntsman's fashion.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The huntsman, Robin Dawe, looked round,  
 He sometimes called a favourite hound,  
 Gently, to see the creature turn,  
 Look happy up and wag his stern.  
 He smiled and nodded and saluted  
 To those who hailed him, as it suited.  
 And patted Pip's, his hunter's neck.  
 His new pink was without a speck.  
 He was a red-faced smiling fellow,  
 His voice clear tenor, full and mellow,  
 His eyes, all fire, were black and small.  
 He had been smashed in many a fall.  
 His eyebrow had a white curved mark  
 Left by the bright shoe of The Lark  
 Down in a ditch by Seven Springs.  
 His coat had all been trod to strings,  
 His ribs laid bare and shoulder broken,  
 Being jumped on down at Water's Oaken

The time his horse came down and rolled.  
His face was of the country mould  
Such as the mason sometimes cutted  
On English moulding-ends which jutted  
Out of the church walls, centuries since.  
And as you never know the quince,  
How good he is, until you try,  
So, in Dawe's face, what met the eye  
Was only part; what lay behind  
Was English character and mind,  
Great kindness, delicate sweet feeling  
(Most shy, most clever in concealing  
Its depth) for beauty of all sorts,  
Great manliness and love of sports,  
A grave, wise thoughtfulness and truth,  
A merry fun outlasting youth,  
A courage terrible to see,  
And mercy for his enemy.

He had a clean-shaved face, but kept  
A hedge of whisker neatly clipped,  
A narrow strip or picture-frame  
(Old Dawe, the woodman, did the same),  
Under his chin from ear to ear.

\* \* \* \* \*

But now the resting hounds gave cheer,  
Joyful and Arrogant and Catch-him  
Smelt the glad news and ran to snatch him:  
The Master's dogcart turned the bend.  
Damsel and Skylark knew their friend,  
A thrill ran through the pack like fire  
And little whimpers ran in quire.  
The horses cocked and pawed and whickered  
Young Cothill's chaser kicked and bickered  
And stood on end and struck out sparks,  
Joyful and Catch-him sang like larks.  
There was the Master in the trap,  
Clutching old Roman in his lap,  
Old Roman, crazy for his brother,  
And putting frenzy in the others



To set them at the dogcart wheels,  
With thrusting heads and little squeals.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Master put old Roman by,  
And eyed the thrusters heedfully.  
He called a few pet hounds and fed  
Three special friends with scraps of bread,  
Then peeled his wraps, climbed down and strode  
Through all those clamourers in the road,  
Saluted friends, looked round the crowd,  
Saw Harridew's three girls and bowed,  
Then took White Rabbit from the groom.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was Sir Peter Bynd, of Coombe;  
Past sixty now, though hearty still,  
A living picture of good-will,  
An old, grave soldier, sweet and kind,  
A courtier with a knightly mind,  
Who felt whatever thing he thought.  
His face was scarred, for he had fought  
Five wars for us. Within his face  
Courage and power had their place,  
Rough energy, decision, force.  
He smiled about him from his horse.  
He had a welcome and salute  
For all, on horse or wheel or foot  
Whatever kind of life each followed.  
His tanned, drawn cheeks looked old and hollowed,  
But still his bright blue eyes were young,  
And when the pack crashed into tongue,  
And stanch White Rabbit shook like fire,  
He sent him at it like a flier,  
And lived with hounds while horses could.

\* \* \* \* \*

"They'm lying in the Ghost Heath Wood,  
Sir Peter," said an earth-stopper  
(Old Baldy Hill), "you'll find 'em there.  
'Z I come'd across I smell 'em plain.  
There 's one up back, down Tuttock's drain,

But, Lord, it's just a bog, the Tuttocks,  
Hounds would be swallowed to the buttocks.  
Heath Wood, Sir Peter's best to draw."

\* \* \* \*

Sir Peter gave two minutes' law  
For Kingston Challow and his daughter;  
He said, "They're late. We'll start the slaughter.  
Ghost Heath, then, Dansey. We'll be going."

\* \* \* \*

Now, at his word, the tide was flowing.  
Off went Maroon, off went the hounds,  
Down road, then off, to Chols Elm Grounds,  
Across soft turf with dead leaves cleaving  
And hillocks that the mole was heaving,  
Mild going to those trotting feet.  
After the scarlet coats the meet  
Came clopping up the grass in spate;  
They poached the trickle at the gate  
Their horses' feet sucked at the mud,  
Excitement in the horses' blood.  
Cocked forward every ear and eye,  
They quivered as the hounds went by,  
They trembled when they first trod grass,  
They would not let another pass,  
They scattered wide up Chols Elm Hill.

The wind was westerly but still,  
The sky a high fair-weather cloud,  
Like meadows ridge-and-furrow ploughed,  
Just glinting sun but scarcely moving.  
Blackbirds and thrushes thought of loving,  
Catkins were out; the day seemed tense  
It was so still. At every fence  
Cow-parsley pushed its thin green fern.  
White-violet leaves showed at the burn.

\* \* \* \*

Young Cothill let his chaser go  
Round Chols Elm Field a turn or so  
To soothe his edge. The riders went  
Chatting and laughing and content

In groups of two or three together,  
 The hounds, a flock of shaking feather,  
 Bobbed on ahead, past Chols Elm Cop,  
 The horses' shoes went clip-a-clop,  
 Along the stony cart-track there,  
 The little spinney was all bare,  
 But in the earth-moist winter day  
 The scarlet coats twixt tree and spray  
 The glistening horses pressing on,  
 The brown-faced lads, Bill, Dick and John,  
 And all the hurry to arrive,  
 Were beautiful like spring alive.

\* \* \* \* \*

The hounds melted away with Master,  
 The tanned lads ran, the field rode faster,  
 The chatter joggled in the throats  
 Of riders bumping by like boats,  
 "We really ought to hunt a bye day."  
 "Fine day for scent," "A fly or die day."  
 "They chopped a bagman in the check,  
 He had a collar round his neck."  
 "Old Ridden's girl 's a pretty flapper."  
 "That Vaughan 's a cad, the whippersnapper."  
 "I tell 'ee, lads, I seed 'em plain  
 Down in the Rough at Shifford's Main,  
 Old Squire stamping like a Duke,  
 So red with blood I thought he'd puke  
 In appleplexie, as they do.  
 Miss Jane stood just as white as dew  
 And heard him out in just white heat,  
 And then she trimmed him down a treat.  
 About Miss Lou it was, or Carrie  
 (She'd be a pretty peach to marry)."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Her'll draw up-wind, so us'll go  
 Down by the furze, we'll see 'em so."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Look, there they go, lad!"

There they went

Across the brook and up the bent,

Past Primrose Wood, past Brady Ride,  
 Along Ghost Heath to cover side.  
 The bobbing scarlet, trotting pack,  
 Turf scatters tossed behind each back,  
 Some horses blowing with a whinny,  
 A jam of horses in the spinney,  
 Close to the ride-gate; leather straining,  
 Saddles all creaking, men complaining,  
 Chaffing each other as they past,  
 On Ghost Heath turf they trotted fast.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now as they neared the Ghost Heath Wood  
 Some riders grumbled, "What 's the good?  
 It 's shot all day and poached all night.  
 We shall draw blank and lose the light,  
 And lose the scent and lose the day.  
 Why can't he draw Hope Goneaway,  
 Or Tuttocks Wood, instead of this?  
 There 's no fox here, there never is."

\* \* \* \* \*

But as he trotted up to cover  
 Robin was watching to discover  
 What chance there was, and many a token  
 Told him that though no hound had spoken,  
 Most of them stirred to something there.  
 The old hounds' muzzles searched the air,  
 Thin ghosts of scents were in their teeth  
 From foxes which had crossed the Heath  
 Not very many hours before.  
 "We'll find," he said, "I'll bet, a score."

\* \* \* \* \*

Along Ghost Heath they trotted well,  
 The hoof-cuts made the bruised earth smell,  
 The shaken brambles scattered drops,  
 Stray pheasants kukkered out of copse,  
 Cracking the twigs down with their knockings  
 And planing out of sight with cockings;  
 A scut or two lopped white to bramble.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now they gathered to the gamble  
 At Ghost Heath Wood on Ghost Heath Down,  
 The hounds went crackling through the brown  
 Dry stalks of bracken killed by frost.  
 The wood stood silent in its host  
 Of halted trees all winter bare.  
 The boughs, like veins that suck the air,  
 Stretched tense, the last leaf scarcely stirred,  
 There came no song from any bird;  
 The darkness of the wood stood still  
 Waiting for fate on Ghost Heath Hill.

\* \* \* \* \*

The whips crept to the sides to view,  
 The Master gave the nod, and "Leu,  
 Leu in. Ed-hoick, ed-hoick. Leu in!"  
 Went Robin, cracking through the whin  
 And through the hedge gap into cover.  
 The binders crashed as hounds went over,  
 And cock-cock-cock the pheasants rose.  
 Then up went stern and down went nose,  
 And Robin's cheerful tenor cried,  
 Through hazel-scrub and stub and ride:  
 "Oh, wind him! beauties, push him out,  
 Yooi, on to him, Yahout, Yahout,  
 Oh, push him out, Yooi, wind him, wind him!"  
 The beauties burst the scrub to find him;  
 They nosed the warren's clipped green lawn,  
 The bramble and the broom were drawn,  
 The covert's northern end was blank.  
 They turned to draw along the bank  
 Through thicker cover than the Rough,  
 Through three-and-four-year understuff  
 Where Robin's forearm screened his eyes;  
 "Yooi, find him, beauties," came his cries.  
 "Hark, hark to Daffodil," the laughter  
 Fal'n from his horn, brought whimpers after,  
 For ends of scents were everywhere.  
 He said, "This Hope's a likely lair,  
 And there's his billets, grey and furred.  
 And George, he's moving, there's a bird."

\* \* \* \* \*

A blue uneasy jay was chacking  
(A swearing screech, like tearing sacking)  
From tree to tree, as in pursuit,  
He said, "That 's it. There 's fox afoot.  
And there, they're feathering, there she speaks.  
Good Daffodil, good Tarrybreeks,  
Hark there to Daffodil, hark, hark!"  
The mild horn's note, the soft-flaked spark  
Of music fell on that rank scent.  
From heart to wild heart magic went.

The whimpering quivered, quavered, rose.  
"Daffodil has it. There she goes.  
Oh, hark to her!" With wild high crying  
From frantic hearts the hounds went flying  
To Daffodil, for that rank taint.  
A waft of 't came warm but faint  
In Robin's mouth, and faded so.  
"First find a fox, then let him go,"  
Cried Robin Dawe. "For any sake  
Ring, Charley, till you're fit to break."  
He cheered his beauties like a lover  
And charged beside them into cover.

## PART II

ON old Cold Crendon's windy tops  
Grows wintrily Blown Hilcote Copse,  
Wind-bitten beech with badger barrows,  
Where brocks eat wasp-grubs with their marrows  
And foxes lie on short-grassed turf,  
Nose between paws, to hear the surf  
Of wind in the beeches drowsily.  
There was our fox bred lustily  
Three years before, and there he berthed,  
Under the beech-roots snugly earthed,  
With a roof of flint and a floor of chalk  
And ten bitten hens' heads each on its stalk,  
Some rabbits' paws, some fur from scuts,  
A badger's corpse and a smell of guano

And there on the night before my tale  
He trotted out for a point in the vale.

\* \* \* \*

He saw, from the cover edge, the valley  
Go trooping down with its droops of sally  
To the brimming river's lipping bend,  
And a light in the inn at Water's End.  
He heard the owl go hunting by  
And the shriek of the mouse the owl made die,  
And the purr of the owl as he tore the red  
Strings from between his claws and fed;  
The smack of joy of the horny lips  
Marbled green with the blobby strips.  
He saw the farms where the dogs were barking,  
Cold Crendon Court and Copsecote Larking;  
The fault with the spring as bright as gleed,  
Green-slash-laced with water-weed.  
A glare in the sky still marked the town,  
Though all folk slept and the blinds were down,  
The street lamps watched the empty square,  
The night-cat sang his evil there.

\* \* \* \*

The fox's nose tipped up and round,  
Since smell is a part of sight and sound.  
Delicate smells were drifting by,  
The sharp nose flaired them heedfully;  
Partridges in the clover stubble,  
Crouched in a ring for the stoat to nubble.  
Rabbit bucks beginning to box;  
A scratching place for the pheasant cocks,  
A hare in the dead grass near the drain,  
And another smell like the spring again.

\* \* \* \*

A faint rank taint like April coming,  
It cocked his ears and his blood went drumming,  
For somewhere out by Ghost Heath Stubs  
Was a roving vixen wanting cubs.  
Over the valley, floating faint  
On a warmth of windflaw, came the taint;

He cocked his ears, he upped his brush,  
And he went upwind like an April thrush.

\* \* \* \* \*

By the Roman Road to Braiches Ridge,  
Where the fallen willow makes a bridge,  
Over the brook by White Hart's Thorn  
To the acres thin with pricking corn,  
Over the sparse green hair of the wheat,  
By the Clench Brook Mill at Clench Brook Leat,  
Through Cowfoot Pastures to Nonely Stevens,  
And away to Poltrewood St. Jevons.  
Past Tott Hill Down all snaked with meuses,  
Past Clench St. Michael and Naunton Crucis,  
Past Howle's Oak Farm where the raving brain  
Of a dog who heard him foamed his chain;  
Then off, as the farmer's window opened,  
Past Stonepits Farm to Upton Hope End,  
Over short sweet grass and worn flint arrows  
And the three dumb hows of Tencombe Barrows.  
And away and away with a rolling scramble,  
Through the sally and up the bramble,  
With a nose for the smells the night wind carried,  
And his red fell clean for being married;  
For clicketting time and Ghost Heath Wood  
Had put the violet in his blood.

\* \* \* \* \*

At Tencombe Rings near the Manor Linney  
His foot made the great black stallion whinny,  
And the stallion's whinny aroused the stable  
And the bloodhound bitches stretched their cable,  
And the clink of the bloodhounds' chain aroused  
The sweet-breathed kye as they chewed and drowsed,  
And the stir of the cattle changed the dream  
Of the cat in the loft to tense green gleam.  
The red-wattled black cock hot from Spain  
Crowed from his perch for dawn again,  
His breast-pufft hens, one-legged on perch,  
Gurgled, beak-down, like men in church,  
They crooned in the dark, lifting one red eye  
In the raftered roost as the fox went by.

\* \* \* \* \*



By Tencombe Regis and Slaughters Court,  
 Through the great grass square of Roman Fort,  
 By Nun's Wood Yews and the Hungry Hill,  
 And the Corpse Way Stones all standing still.  
 By Seven Springs Mead to Deerlip Brook,  
 And a lolloping leap to Water Hook.  
 Then with eyes like sparks and his blood awoken,  
 Over the grass to Water's Oaken,  
 And over the hedge and into ride  
 In Ghost Heath Wood for his roving bride.

\* \* \* \*

Before the dawn he had loved and fed  
 And found a kennel, and gone to bed  
 On a shelf of grass in a thick of gorse  
 That would bleed a hound and blind a horse.  
 There he slept in the mild west weather  
 With his nose and brush well tucked together,  
 He slept like a child, who sleeps yet hears  
 With the self who needs neither eyes nor ears.

\* \* \* \*

He slept while the pheasant cock untucked  
 His head from his wing flew down and kukked,  
 While the drove of the starlings whirred and wheeled  
 Out of the ash-trees into field,  
 While with great black flags that flogged and paddled  
 The rooks went out to the plough and straddled,  
 Straddled wide on the moist red cheese  
 Of the furrows driven at Uppat's Leas.

\* \* \* \*

Down in the village men awoke,  
 The chimneys breathed with a faint blue smoke.  
 The fox slept on, though tweaks and twitches,  
 Due to his dreams, ran down his flitches.

\* \* \* \*

The cows were milked and the yards were sluiced,  
 And the cocks and hens let out of roost,  
 Windows were opened, mats were beaten,  
 All men's breakfasts were cooked and eaten;  
 But out in the gorse on the grassy shelf  
 The sleeping fox looked after himself.

\* \* \* \*

Deep in his dream he heard the life  
 Of the woodland seek for food or wife,  
 The hop of a stoat, a buck that thumped,  
 The squeal of a rat as a weasel jumped,  
 The blackbird's chackering scattering crying,  
 The rustling bents from the rabbits flying,  
 Cows in a byre, and distant men,  
 And Condicote church-clock striking ten.

\* \* \* \* \*

At eleven o'clock a boy went past,  
 With a rough-haired terrier following fast.  
 The boy's sweet whistle and dog's quick yap  
 Woke the fox from out of his nap.

\* \* \* \* \*

He rose and stretched till the claws in his pads  
 Stuck hornily out like long black gads.  
 He listened a while, and his nose went round  
 To catch the smell of the distant sound.

\* \* \* \* \*

The windward smells came free from taint—  
 They were rabbit, strongly, with lime-kiln, faint,  
 A wild-duck, likely, at Sars Holt Pond,  
 And sheep on the Sars Holt Down beyond.

\* \* \* \* \*

The leeward smells were much less certain,  
 For the Ghost Heath Hill was like a curtain,  
 Yet vague, from the leeward, now and then,  
 Came muffled sounds like the sound of men.

\* \* \* \* \*

He moved to his right to a clearer space,  
 And all his soul came into his face,  
 Into his eyes and into his nose,  
 As over the hill a murmur rose.  
 His ears were cocked and his keen nose flaired,  
 He sneered with his lips till his teeth were bared,  
 He trotted right and lifted a pad  
 Trying to test what foes he had.

\* \* \* \* \*

On Ghost Heath turf was a steady drumming  
 Which sounded like horses quickly coming,

It died as the hunt went down the dip,  
 Then Malapert yelped at Myngs's whip.  
 A bright iron horseshoe clinked on stone,  
 Then a man's voice spoke, not one alone,  
 Then a burst of laughter, swiftly still,  
 Muffled away by Ghost Heath Hill.  
 Then, indistinctly, the clop, clip, clep,  
 On Brady Ride, of a horse's step.  
 Then silence, then, in a burst, much clearer,  
 Voices and horses coming nearer,  
 And another noise, of a pit-pat beat  
 On the Ghost Hill grass, of foxhound feet.

\* \* \* \* \*

He sat on his haunches listening hard,  
 While his mind went over the compass card.  
 Men were coming and rest was done,  
 But he still had time to get fit to run;  
 He could outlast horse and outrace hound,  
 But men were devils from Lobs's Pound.  
 Scent was burning, the going good,  
 The world one lust for a fox's blood,  
 The main earths stopped and the drains put to,  
 And fifteen miles to the land he knew.  
 But of all the ills, the ill least pleasant  
 Was to run in the light when men were present.  
 Men in the fields to shout and sign  
 For a lift of hounds to a fox's line.  
 Men at the earth, at the long point's end,  
 Men at each check and none his friend,  
 Guessing each shift that a fox contrives;  
 But still, needs must when the devil drives.

\* \* \* \* \*

He readied himself, then a soft horn blew,  
 Then a clear voice carolled, "Ed-hoick! Eleu!"  
 Then the wood-end rang with the clear voice crying  
 And the cackle of scrub where hounds were trying.  
 Then the horn blew nearer, a hound's voice quivered,  
 Then another, then more, till his body shivered,  
 He left his kennel and trotted thence  
 With his ears flexed back and his nerves all tense.

He trotted down with his nose intent  
 For a fox's line to cross his scent,  
 It was only fair (he being a stranger)  
 That the native fox should have the danger.  
 Danger was coming, so swift, so swift,  
 That the pace of his trot began to lift  
 The blue-winged Judas, a jay began  
 Swearing, hounds whimpered, air stank of man

\* \* \* \* \*

He hurried his trotting, he now felt frightened,  
 It was his poor body made hounds excited.  
 He felt as he ringed the great wood through  
 That he ought to make for the land he knew.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then the hounds' excitement quivered and quickened,  
 Then a horn blew death till his marrow sickened,  
 Then the wood behind was a crash of cry  
 For the blood in his veins; it made him fly.

\* \* \* \* \*

They were on his line; it was death to stay.  
 He must make for home by the shortest way,  
 But with all this yelling and all this wrath  
 And all these devils, how find a path?

\* \* \* \* \*

He ran like a stag to the wood's north corner,  
 Where the hedge was thick and the ditch a yawner,  
 But the scarlet glimpse of Myngs on Turk,  
 Watching the woodside, made him shirk.

\* \* \* \* \*

He ringed the wood and looked at the south.  
 What wind there was blew into his mouth.  
 But close to the woodland's blackthorn thicket  
 Was Dansey, still as a stone, on picket.  
 At Dansey's back were a twenty more  
 Watching the cover and pressing fore.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fox drew in and flaired with his muzzle.  
 Death was there if he messed the puzzle.\*

There were men without and hounds within,  
 A crying that stiffened the hair on skin.  
 Teeth in cover and death without,  
 Both deaths coming, and no way out.

\* \* \* \* \*

His nose ranged swiftly, his heart beat fast,  
 Then a crashing cry rose up in a blast,  
 Then horse-hooves trampled, then horses' flitches  
 Burst their way through the hazel switches.  
 Then the horn again made the hounds like mad,  
 And a man, quite near, said, "Found, by Gad!"  
 And a man, quite near, said, "Now he'll break.  
 Larks Leybourne Copse is the line he'll take."  
 And men moved up with their talk and stink  
 And the traplike noise of the horseshoe clink.  
 Men whose coming meant death from teeth  
 In a worrying wrench, with him beneath.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fox sneaked down by the cover side  
 (With his ears flexed back) as a snake would glide;  
 He took the ditch at the cover-end,  
 He hugged the ditch as his only friend.  
 The blackbird cock with the golden beak  
 Got out of his way with a jabbering shriek,  
 And the shriek told Tom on the raking bay  
 That for eighteenpence he was gone away.

\* \* \* \* \*

He ran in the hedge in the triple growth  
 Of bramble and hawthorn, glad of both,  
 Till a couple of fields were past, and then  
 Came the living death of the dread of men.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then, as ne listened, he heard a "Hoy!"  
 Tom Dansey's horn and "Awa-wa-woyl!"  
 Then all hounds crying with all their forces,  
 Then a thundering down of seventy horses.  
 Robin Dawe's horn and halloes of "Hey  
 Hark Hollar, Hoik!" and "Gone away!"  
 "Hark Hollar Hoik!" and a smack of the whip,  
 A yelp as a taff hound caught the clip.

"Hark Hollar, Hark Hollar!" then Robin made  
Pip go crash through the cut and laid.  
Hounds were over and on his line  
With a head like bees upon Tipple Tine.  
The sound of the nearness sent a flood  
Of terror of death through the fox's blood.  
He upped his brush and he cocked his nose,  
And he went upwind as a racer goes.

\* \* \* \*

Bold Robin Dawe was over first,  
Cheering his hounds on at the burst;  
The field were spurring to be in it.  
"Hold hard, sirs, give them half a minute,"  
Came from Sir Peter on his white.  
The hounds went romping with delight  
Over the grass and got together,  
The tail hounds galloped hell-for-leather  
After the pack at Myngs's yell.  
A cry like every kind of bell  
Rang from these rompers as they raced.

\* \* \* \*

The riders, thrusting to be placed,  
Jammed down their hats and shook their horses;  
The hounds romped past with all their forces,  
They crashed into the blackthorn fence.  
The scent was heavy on their sense,  
So hot, it seemed the living thing,  
It made the blood within them sing;  
Gusts of it made their hackles rise,  
Hot gulps of it were agonies  
Of joy, and thirst for blood and passion.  
"Forward!" cried Robin, "that 's the fashion."  
He raced beside his pack to cheer.

The field's noise died upon his ear,  
A faint horn, far behind, blew thin  
In cover, lest some hound were in.  
Then instantly the great grass rise  
Shut field and cover from his eyes,

He and his racers were alone.  
"A dead fox or a broken bone,"  
Said Robin, peering for his prey.

The rise, which shut the field away,  
Showed him the vale's great map spread out,  
The down's lean flank and thrusting snout,  
Pale pastures, red-brown plough, dark wood,  
Blue distance, still as solitude,  
Glitter of water here and there,  
The trees so delicately bare,  
The dark green gorse and bright green holly.  
"O glorious God," he said, "how jolly!"  
And there downhill two fields ahead  
The lolloping red dog-fox sped  
Over Poor Pastures to the brook.  
He grasped these things in one swift look,  
Then dived into the bullfinch heart  
Through thorns that ripped his sleeves apart  
And skutched new blood upon his brow.  
"His point 's Lark's Leybourne Covers now,"  
Said Robin, landing with a grunt.  
"Forrard, my beautifuls!"

The hunt

Followed downhill to race with him,  
White Rabbit, with his swallow's skim,  
Drew within hail. "Quick burst, Sir Peter."  
"A traveller. Nothing could be neater.  
Making for Godsdow Clumps, I take it?"  
"Lark's Leybourne, sir, if he can make it.  
Forrard!"

Bill Ridden thundered down,  
His big mouth grinned beneath his frown,  
The hounds were going away from horses.  
He saw the glint of watercourses,  
Yell Brook and Wittold's Dyke, ahead,  
His horseshoes sliced the green turf red.  
Young Cothill's chaser rushed and past him,  
Nob Maner, running next, said "Blast him!

The poet chap who thinks he rides."  
 Hugh Colway's mare made straking strides  
 Across the grass, the Colonel next,  
 Then Squire, volleying oaths, and vext,  
 Fighting his hunter for refusing;  
 Bell Ridden, like a cutter cruising,  
 Sailing the grass; then Cob on Warder,  
 Then Minton Price upon Marauder;  
 Ock Gurney with his eyes intense,  
 Burning as with a different sense,  
 His big mouth muttering glad "By damns!"  
 Then Pete, crouched down from head to hams,  
 Rapt like a saint, bright focussed flame;  
 Bennett, with devils in his wame,  
 Chewing black cud and spitting slanting;  
 Copse scattering jests and Stukely ranting;  
 Sal Ridden taking line from Dansey;  
 Long Robert forcing Necromancy;  
 A dozen more with bad beginnings;  
 Myngs riding hard to snatch an innings.  
 A wild last hound with high shrill yelps  
 Smacked forrard with some whipthong skelps.  
 Then last of all, at top of rise,  
 The crowd on foot, all gasps and eyes;  
 The run up hill had winded them.

\* \* \* \* \*

They saw the Yell Brook like a gem  
 Blue in the grass a short mile on;  
 They heard faint cries, but hounds were gone  
 A good eight fields and out of sight,  
 Except a rippled glimmer white  
 Going away with dying cheering,  
 And scarlet flappings disappearing,  
 And scattering horses going, going,  
 Going like mad, White Rabbit snowing  
 Far on ahead, a loose horse taking  
 Fence after fence with stirrups shaking,  
 And scarlet specks and dark specks dwindling.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nearer, were twigs knocked into kindling,  
 A much bashed fence still dropping stick,  
 Flung clods still quivering from the kick;



## REYNARD THE FOX

Cut hoof-marks pale in cheesy clay,  
 The horse-smell blowing clean away;  
 Birds flitting back into the cover.  
 One last faint cry, then all was over.  
 The hunt had been, and found, and gone,

\* \* \* \* \*

At Neaking's Farm three furlongs on,  
 Hounds raced across the Waysmore Road,  
 Where many of the riders slowed  
 To tittup down a grassy lane  
 Which led as hounds led in the main,  
 And gave no danger of a fall.  
 There as they tittupped one and all,  
 Big Twenty Stone came scattering by,  
 His great mare made the hoof-casts fly.  
 "By leavel!" he cried. "Come on! Come up!  
 This fox is running like a tup;  
 Let's leave this lane and get to terms,  
 No sense in crawling here like worms.  
 Come, let me pass and let me start.  
 This fox is running like a hart,  
 And this is going to be a run.  
 Come on, I want to see the fun.  
 Thanky. By leavel! Now, Maiden, do it."  
 He faced the fence and put her through it,  
 Shielding his eyes lest spikes should blind him;  
 The crashing blackthorn closed behind him.  
 Mud-scatters chased him as he scudded;  
 His mare's ears cocked, her neat feet thudded.

\* \* \* \* \*

The kestrel cruising over meadow  
 Watched the hunt gallop on his shadow,  
 Wee figures, almost at a stand,  
 Crossing the multicoloured land,  
 Slow as a shadow on a dial.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some horses, swerving at a trial,  
 Balked at a fence: at gates they bunched.  
 The mud about the gates was dunched  
 Like German cheese; men pushed for places  
 And kicked the mud into the faces

Of those who made them room to pass.  
 The half-mile's gallop on the grass  
 Had tailed them out and warmed their blood.  
 "His point 's the Banner Barton Wood."  
 "That, or Goat's Gorse." "A stinger, this."  
 "You're right in that; by Jove, it is."  
 "An upwind travelling fox, by Georgel!"  
 "They say Tom viewed him at the forge."  
 "Well, let me pass and let's be on."

\* \* \* \* \*

They crossed the lane to Tolderton,  
 The hill-marl died to valley clay,  
 And there before them ran the grey  
 Yell Water, swirling as it ran,  
 The Yell Brook of the hunting man.  
 The hunters eyed it and were grim.

\* \* \* \* \*

They saw the water snaking slim  
 Ahead, like silver; they could see  
 (Each man) his pollard willow-tree  
 Firming the bank; they felt their horses  
 Catch the gleam's hint and gather forces;  
 They heard the men behind draw near.  
 Each horse was trembling as a spear  
 Trembles in hand when tense to hurl.  
 They saw the brimmed brook's eddies curl;  
 The willow-roots like water-snakes;  
 The beaten holes the ratten makes.  
 They heard the water's rush; they heard  
 Hugh Colway's mare come like a bird;  
 A faint cry from the hounds ahead,  
 Then saddle-strain, the bright hooves' tread,  
 Quick words, the splash of mud, the launch,  
 The sick hope that the bank be staunch,  
 Then Souse, with Souse to left and right.  
 Maroon across, Sir Peter's white  
 Down but pulled up, Tom over, Hugh  
 Mud to the hat but over too,  
 Well splashed by Squire, who was in.

\* \* \* \* \*

With dragged pink stuck close to skin

The Squire leaned from bank and hauled  
His mired horse's rein; he bawled  
For help from each man racing by.  
"What, help you pull him out? Not I.  
What made you pull him in?" They said.  
Nob Manor cleared and turned his head,  
And cried, "Wade up. The ford's upstream."  
Ock Gurney in a cloud of steam  
Stood by his dripping cob and wrung  
The taste of brook mud from his tongue,  
And scraped his poor cob's pasterns clean.  
"Lord, what a crowner we've a-been.  
This jumping brook's a mucky job."  
He muttered, grinning, "Lord, poor cob!  
Now, sir, let me." He turned to Squire  
And cleared his hunter from the mire  
By skill and sense and strength of arm.

Meanwhile the fox passed Nonesuch Farm,  
Keeping the spinney on his right.  
Hounds raced him here with all their might  
Along the short firm grass, like fire.  
The cowman viewed him from the byre  
Lolloping on, six fields ahead,  
Then hounds, still carrying such a head  
It made him stare, then Rob on Pip,  
Sailing the great grass like a ship,  
Then grand Maroon in all his glory,  
Sweeping his strides, his great chest hoary  
With foam fleck and the pale hill-marl.  
They strode the Leet, they flew the Snarl,  
They knocked the nuts at Nonesuch Mill,  
Raced up the spur of Gallows Hill  
And viewed him there. The line he took  
Was Tineton and the Pantry Brook,  
Going like fun and hounds like mad.  
Tom glanced to see what friends he had  
Still within sight, before he turned  
The ridge's shoulder; he discerned,  
One field away, young Cothill sailing  
Easily up. \*Pete Gurney failing,

Hugh Colway quartering on Sir Peter,  
Bill waiting on the mare to beat her,  
Sal Ridden skirting to the right.  
A horse, with stirrups flashing bright  
Over his head at every stride,  
Looked like the Major's; Tom espied  
Far back a scarlet speck of man  
Running, and straddling as he ran.  
Charles Copse was up, Nob Manor followed,  
Then Bennett's big-boned black that wallowed,  
Clumsy, but with the strength of ten.  
Then black and brown and scarlet men,  
Brown horses, white and black and grey,  
Scattered a dozen fields away.  
The shoulder shut the scene away.

From the Gallows Hill to the Tineton Copse  
There were ten ploughed fields, like ten full-stops,  
All wet red clay, where a horse's foot  
Would be swathed, feet thick, like an ash-tree root.  
The fox raced on, on the headlands firm,  
Where his swift feet scared the coupling worm;  
The rooks rose raving to curse him raw,  
He snarled a sneer at their swoop and caw.  
Then on, then on, down a half-ploughed field  
Where a ship-like plough drove glitter-keeled,  
With a bay horse near and a white horse leading,  
And a man saying "Zook," and the red earth bleeding.  
He gasped as he saw the ploughman drop  
The stilts and swear at the team to stop.  
The ploughman ran in his red clay clogs,  
Crying, "Zick un, Towzer; zick, good dogs!"  
A couple of wire-haired lurchers lean  
Arose from his wallet, nosing keen;  
With a rushing swoop they were on his track,  
Putting chest to stubble to bite his back.  
He swerved from his line with the curs at heel,  
The teeth as they missed him clicked like steel.  
With a worrying snarl, they quartered on him,  
While the ploughman shouted, "Zick; upon him."

The lurcher dogs soon shot their bolt,  
 And the fox raced on by the Hazel Holt,  
 Down the dead grass tilt to the sandstone gash  
 Of the Pantry Brook at Tineton Ash.  
 The loitering water, flooded full,  
 Had yeast on its lip like raddled wool,  
 It was wrinkled over with Arab script  
 Of eddies that twisted up and s'ipped  
 The stepping-stones had a rush about them,  
 So the fox plunged in and swam without them.

\* \* \* \* \*

He crossed to the cattle's drinking shallow,  
 Firmed up with rush and the roots of mallow;  
 He wrung his coat from his draggled bones  
 And romped away for the Sarsen Stones.

\* \* \* \* \*

A sneaking glance with his ears flexed back  
 Made sure that his scent had failed the pack,  
 For the red clay, good for corn and roses,  
 Was cold for scent and brought hounds to noses

He slackened pace by the Tineton Tree  
 (A vast hollow ash-tree grown in three),  
 He wriggled a shake and padded slow,  
 Not sure if the hounds were on or no.

\* \* \* \* \*

A horn blew faint, then he heard the sounds  
 Of a cantering huntsman, lifting hounds;  
 The ploughman had raised his hat for sign,  
 And the hounds were lifted and on his line.  
 He heard the splash in the Pantry Brook,  
 And a man's voice: "Thiccy 's the line he took."  
 And a clear "Yoi doit!" and a whimpering quaver,  
 Though the lurcher dogs had dulled the savour.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fox went off while the hounds made halt,  
 And the horses breathed and the field found fault,  
 But the whimpering rose to a crying crash  
 By the hollow ruin of Tineton Ash.

Then again the kettledrum horsehooves beat,  
 And the green blades bent to the fox's feet,  
 And the cry rose keen not far behind  
 Of the "Blood, blood, blood," in the foxhounds' mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fox was strong, he was full of running,  
 He could run for an hour and then be cunning,  
 But the cry behind him made him chill,  
 They were nearer now and they meant to kill.  
 They meant to run him until his blood  
 Clogged on his heart as his brush with mud,  
 Till his back bent up and his tongue hung flagging,  
 And his belly and brush were filthed from dragging.  
 Till he crouched stone-still, dead-beat and dirty,  
 With nothing but teeth against the thirty.  
 And all the way to that blinding end  
 He would meet with men and have none his friend:  
 Men to holloa and men to run him,  
 With stones to stagger and yells to stun him;  
 Men to head him, with whips to beat him,  
 Teeth to mangle and mouths to eat him.  
 And all the way, that wild high crying.  
 To cold his blood with the thought of dying,  
 The horn and the cheer, and the drum-like thunder  
 Of the horsehooves stamping the meadows under.  
 He upped his brush and went with a will  
 For the Sarsen Stones on Wan Dyke Hill.

\* \* \* \* \*

As he ran the meadow by Tineton Church  
 A christening party left the porch;  
 They stood stock still as he pounded by,  
 They wished him luck but they thought he'd die.  
 The toothless babe in his long white coat  
 Looked delicate meat, the fox took note;  
 But the sight of them grinning there, pointing finger,  
 Made him put on steam till he went a stinger.

\* \* \* \* \*

Past Tineton Church, over Tineton Waste,  
 With the lolloping ease of a fox's haste,  
 The fur on his chest blown dry with the air,  
 His brush still up and his cheek-teeth bare.

Over the Waste, where the ganders grazed,  
 The long swift lilt of his loping lazed,  
 His ears cocked up as his blood ran higher,  
 He saw his point, and his eyes took fire.  
 The Wan Dyke Hill with its fir-tree barren,  
 Its dark of gorse and its rabbit-warren,  
 The Dyke on its heave like a tightened girth,  
 And holes in the Dyke where a fox might earth.  
 He had rabbitied there long months before,  
 The earths were deep and his need was sore;  
 The way was new, but he took a bearing,  
 And rushed like a blown ship billow-sharing.

\* \* \* \* \*

Off Tineton Common to Tineton Dean,  
 Where the wind-hid elders pushed with green;  
 Through the Dean's thin cover across the lane,  
 And up Midwinter to King of Spain.  
 Old Joe, at digging his garden grounds,  
 Said: "A fox, being hunted; where be hounds?  
 O lord, my back, to be young again,  
 'Stead a zellin' zider in King of Spain!  
 O hark! I hear 'em, O sweet, O sweet.  
 Why there be redcoat in Gearge's wheat.  
 And there be redcoat, and there they gallop.  
 Thur go a browncoat down a wallop.  
 Quick, Ellen, quick! Come, Susan, fly!  
 Here'm hounds. I zeed the fox go by,  
 Go by like thunder, go by like blasting,  
 With his girt white teeth all looking ghasting.  
 Look, there come hounds! Hark, hear 'em crying?  
 Lord, belly to stubble, ain't they flying!  
 There's huntsman, there. The fox come past  
 (As I was digging) as fast as fast.  
 He's only been gone a minute by;  
 A girt dark dog as pert as pye."

Ellen and Susan came out scattering  
 Brooms and dustpans till all was clattering;  
 They saw the pack come head-to-foot  
 Running like racers, nearly mute;  
 Robin and Dansey quartering near  
 All going gallop like startled deer.

A half-dozen flitting scarlets showing  
 In the thin green Dean where the pines were growing.  
 Black coats and brown coats thrusting and spurring,  
 Sending the partridge coveys whirring.  
 Then a rattle uphill and a clop up lane,  
 It emptied the bar of the King of Spain.

\* \* \* \*

Tom left his cider, Dick left his bitter,  
 Granfer James left his pipe and spitter;  
 Out they came from the sawdust floor.  
 They said, "They'm going." They said, "O Lor'!"

The fox raced on, up the Barton Balks,  
 With a crackle of kex in the nettle stalks,  
 Over Hammond's grass to the dark green line  
 Of the larch-wood smelling of turpentine.  
 Scratch Steven Larches, black to the sky,  
 A sadness breathing with one long sigh,  
 Grey ghosts of trees under funeral plumes,  
 A mist of twig over soft brown glooms.  
 As he entered the wood he heard the smacks,  
 Chip-jar, of the fir-pole feller's axe.  
 He swerved to the left to a broad green ride,  
 Where a boy made him rush for the farther side.  
 He swerved to the left, to the Barton Road,  
 But there were the timberers come to load—  
 Two timber-carts and a couple of carters  
 With straps round their knees instead of garters.  
 He swerved to the right, straight down the wood,  
 The carters watched him, the boy hallooed.  
 He leaped from the larch-wood into tillage,  
 The cobbler's garden of Barton village.

\* \* \* \*

The cobbler bent at his wooden foot,  
 Beating sprigs in a broken boot;  
 He wore old glasses with thick horn rim,  
 He scowled at his work, for his sight was dim.  
 His face was dingy, his lips were grey,  
 From primming sparrowbills day by day.  
 As he turned his boot he heard a noise  
 At his garden-end, and he thought, "It 's boys."

\* \* \* \*



He saw his cat nip up on the shed,  
 Where her back arched up till it touched her head;  
 He saw his rabbit race round and round  
 Its little black box three feet from ground.  
 His six hens cluckered and flocked to perch,  
 "That's boys," said cobbler, "so I'll go search."  
 He reached his stick and blinked in his wrath,  
 When he saw a fox in his garden path.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fox swerved left and scrambled out,  
 Knocking crinked green shells from the brussels-sprout  
 He scrambled out through the cobbler's paling,  
 And up Pill's orchard to Purton's Tailing,  
 Across the plough at the top of bent,  
 Through the heaped manure to kill his scent,  
 Over to Aldam's, up to Cappell's,  
 Past Nursery Lot with its whitewashed apples,  
 Past Colston's Broom, past Gaunt's, past Shere's,  
 Past Foxwhelps' Oasts with their hooded ears,  
 Past Monk's Ash Clerewell, past Beggars' Oak,  
 Past the great elms blue with the Hinton smoke.  
 Along Long Hinton to Hinton Green,  
 Where the wind-washed steeple stood serene  
 With its golden bird still sailing air.  
 Past Banner Barton, past Chipping Bare,  
 Past Maddings Hollow, down Dundry Dip,  
 And up Goose Grass to the Sailing Ship.

\* \* \* \* \*

The three black firs of the Ship stood still  
 On the bare chalk heave of the Dundry Hill.  
 The fox looked back as he slackened past  
 The scaled red-bole of the mizen-mast.

\* \* \* \* \*

There they were coming, mute but swift—  
 A scarlet smear in the blackthorn rift,  
 A white horse rising, a dark horse flying,  
 And the hungry hounds too tense for crying.  
 Stormcock leading, his stern spear straight,  
 Racing as though for a piece of plate,  
 Little speck horsemen field on field;  
 Then Dansey viewed him and Robin squealed.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the "View Halloo!" the hounds went frantic,  
 Back went Stormcock and up went Antic,  
 Up went Skylark as Antic sped,  
 It was zest to blood how they carried head.  
 Skylark drooped as Maroon drew by,  
 Their hackles lifted, they scored to cry.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fox knew well that, before they tore him,  
 They should try their speed on the downs before him.  
 There were three more miles to the Wan Dyke Hill,  
 But his heart was high that he beat them still.  
 The wind of the downland charmed his bones,  
 So off he went for the Sarsen Stones.

The moan of the three great firs in the wind  
 And the "Ai" of the foxhounds died behind;  
 Wind-dapples followed the hill-wind's breath  
 On the Kill Down Gorge where the Danes found death.  
 Larks scattered up; the peewits feeding  
 Rose in a flock from the Kill Down Steeding.  
 The hare leaped up from her form and swerved  
 Swift left for the Starveall, harebell-turved.  
 On the wind-bare thorn some longtails prinking  
 Cried sweet as though wind-blown glass were chinking.  
 Behind came thudding and loud halloo,  
 Or a cry from hounds as they came to view.

\* \* \* \* \*

The pure clean air came sweet to his lungs,  
 Till he thought foul scorn of those crying tongues.  
 In a three mile more he would reach the haven  
 In the Wan Dyke croaked on by the raven.  
 In a three mile more he would make his berth  
 On the hard cool floor of a Wan Dyke earth,  
 Too deep for spade, too curved for terrier,  
 With the pride of the race to make rest the merrier.  
 In a three mile more he would reach his dream,  
 So his game heart gulped and he put on steam.

\* \* \* \* \*

Like a rocket shot to a ship ashore  
 The lean red bolt of his body tore,



Like a ripple of wind running swift on grass;  
Like a shadow on wheat when a cloud blows past,  
Like a turn at the buoy in a cutter sailing  
When the bright green gleam lips white at the railing.  
Like the April snake whipping back to sheath,  
Like the gannets' hurtle on fish beneath,  
Like a kestrel chasing, like a sickle reaping,  
Like all things swooping, like all things sweeping,  
Like a hound for stay, like a stag for swift,  
With his shadow beside like spinning drift.

Past the gibbet-stock all stuck with nails,  
Where they hanged in chains what had hung at jails,  
Past Ashmundshowe where Ashmund sleeps,  
And none but the tumbling peewit weeps,  
Past Curlew Calling, the gaunt grey corner  
Where the curlew comes as a summer mourner,  
Past Blowbury Beacon, shaking his fleece,  
Where all winds hurry and none brings peace;  
Then down on the mile-long green decline,  
Where the turf's like spring and the air's like wine,  
Where the sweeping spurs of the downland spill  
Into Wan Brook Valley and Wan Dyke Hill.

On he went with a galloping rally  
Past Maesbury Clump for Wan Brook Valley.  
The blood in his veins went romping high,  
"Get on, on, on, to the earth or die."  
The air of the downs went purely past  
Till he felt the glory of going fast,  
Till the terror of death, though there indeed,  
Was lulled for a while by his pride of speed.  
He was romping away from hounds and hunt,  
He had Wan Dyke Hill and his earth in front,  
In a one mile more when his point was made  
He would rest in safety from dog or spade;  
Nose between paws he would hear the shout  
Of the "Gone to earth!" to the hounds without,  
The whine of the hounds, and their cat-feet gadding,  
Scratching the earth, and their breath pad-padding:

He would hear the horn call hounds away,  
And rest in peace till another day.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

In one mile more he would lie at rest,  
So for one mile more he would go his best.  
He reached the dip at the long droop's end  
And he took what speed he had still to spend.

So down past Maesbury beech-clump grey  
That would not be green till the end of May,  
Past Arthur's Table, the white chalk boulder,  
Where pasque flowers purple the down's grey shoulder,  
Past Quichelm's Keeping, past Harry's Thorn,  
To Thirty Acre all thin with corn.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

As he raced the corn towards Wan Dyke Brook  
The pack had view of the way he took;  
Robin hallooed from the downland's crest,  
He capped them on till they did their best.  
The quarter-mile to the Wan Brook's brink  
Was raced as quick as a man can think.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

And here, as he ran to the huntsman's yelling,  
The fox first felt that the pace was telling;  
His body and lungs seemed all grown old,  
His legs less certain, his heart less bold,  
The hound-noise nearer, the hill-slope steeper,  
The thud in the blood of his body deeper.  
His pride in his speed, his joy in the race,  
Were withered away, for what use was pace?  
He had run his best, and the hounds ran better,  
Then the going worsened, the earth was wetter.  
Then his brush drooped down till it sometimes dragged,  
And his fur felt sick and his chest was tagged  
With taggles of mud, and his pads seemed lead,  
It was well for him he'd an earth ahead.

Down he went to the brook and over,  
Out of the corn and into the clover,  
Over the slope that the Wan Brook drains,  
Past Battle Tump where they earthed the Danes,

Then up the hill that the Wan Dyke rings  
Where the Sarsen Stones stand grand like kings.

\* \* \* \*

Seven Sarsens of granite grim,  
As he ran them by they looked at him;  
As he leaped the lip of their earthen paling  
The hounds were gaining and he was failing.

\* \* \* \*

He passed the Sarsens, he left the spur,  
He pressed uphill to the blasted fir,  
He slipped as he leaped the hedge; he slithered.  
"He 's mine," thought Robin. "He 's done; he 's dithered."

\* \* \* \*

At the second attempt he cleared the fence,  
He turned half-right where the gorse was dense,  
He was leading hounds by a furlong clear.  
He was past his best, but his earth was near.  
He ran up gorse to the spring of the ramp,  
The steep green wall of the dead men's camp,  
He sidled up it and scampered down  
To the deep green ditch of the Dead Men's Town.

\* \* \* \*

Within, as he reached that soft green turf,  
The wind, blowing lonely, moaned like surf,  
Desolate ramparts rose up steep  
On either side, for the ghosts to keep.  
He raced the trench, past the rabbit warren,  
Close-grown with moss which the wind made barren;  
He passed the spring where the rushes spread,  
And there in the stones was his earth ahead.  
One last short burst upon failing feet—  
There life lay waiting, so sweet, so sweet,  
Rest in a darkness, balm for aches.

\* \* \* \*

The earth was stopped. It was barred with stakes.

\* \* \* \*

With the hounds at head so close behind  
He had to run ~~as~~ he changed his mind.

This earth, as he saw, was stopped, but still  
 There was one earth more on the Wan Dyke Hill—  
 A rabbit burrow a furlong on,  
 He could kennel there till the hounds were gone.  
 Though his death seemed near he did not blench,  
 He upped his brush and he ran the trench.

\* \* \* \* \*

He ran the trench while the wind moaned treble,  
 Earth trickled down, there were falls of pebble.  
 Down in the valley of that dark gash  
 The wind-withered grasses looked like ash.  
 Trickles of stones and earth fell down  
 In that dark alley of Dead Men's Town.  
 A hawk arose from a fluff of feathers,  
 From a distant fold came a bleat of wethers.  
 He heard no noise from the hounds behind  
 But the hill-wind moaning like something blind.

\* \* \* \* \*

He turned the bend in the hill, and there  
 Was his rabbit-hole with its mouth worn bafe;  
 But there, with a gun tucked under his arm,  
 Was young Sid Kissop of Purlpit's Farm,  
 With a white hob ferret to drive the rabbit  
 Into a net which was set to nab it.  
 And young Jack Cole peered over the wall,  
 And loosed a pup with a "Z'bite en, Saul!"  
 The terrier pup attacked with a will,  
 So the fox swerved right and away downhill.

\* \* \* \* \*

Down from the ramp of the Dyke he ran  
 To the bracken patch where the gorse began,  
 Into the gorse, where the hill's heave hid  
 The line he took from the eyes of Sid;  
 He swerved downwind and ran like a hare  
 For the wind-blown spinney below him there.

\* \* \* \* \*

He slipped from the gorse to the spinney dark  
 (There were curled grey growths on the oak-tree bark);  
 He saw no more of the terrier pup,  
 But he heard men speak and the hounds come up.

\* \* \* \* \*

He crossed the spinney with ears intent  
 For the cry of hounds on the way he went;  
 His heart was thumping, the hounds were near now,  
 He could make no sprint at a cry and cheer now,  
 He was past his perfect, his strength was failing,  
 His brush sag-sagged and his legs were ailing.  
 He felt, as he skirted Dead Men's Town,  
 That in one mile more they would have him down.

Through the withered oak's wind-crouching tops  
 He saw men's scarlet above the copse,  
 He heard men's oaths, yet he felt hounds slacken,  
 In the frondless stalks of the brittle bracken.  
 He felt that the unseen link which bound  
 His spine to the nose of the leading hound  
 Was snapped, that the hounds no longer knew  
 Which way to follow nor what to do;  
 That the threat of the hounds' teeth left his neck,  
 They had ceased to run, they had come to check.  
 They were quartering wide on the Wan Hill's bent.

\* \* \* \* \*

The terrier's chase had killed his scent.

\* \* \* \* \*

He heard bits chink as the horses shifted,  
 He heard hounds cast, then he heard hounds lifted,  
 But there came no cry from a new attack;  
 His heart grew steady, his breath came back.

\* \* \* \* \*

He left the spinney and ran its edge  
 By the deep dry ditch of the blackthorn hedge;  
 Then out of the ditch and down the meadow,  
 Trotting at ease in the blackthorn shadow,  
 Over the track called Godsdown Road,  
 To the great grass heave of the gods' abode.  
 He was moving now upon land he knew:  
 Up Clench Royal and Morton Tew,  
 The Pol Brook, Cheddesdon, and East Stoke Church,  
 High Clench St. Lawrence and Tinker's Birch.  
 Land he had roved on night by night,  
 For hot blood-suckage or furry bite.

The threat of the hounds behind was gone;  
He breathed deep pleasure and trotted on.

While young Sid Kissop thrashed the pup  
Robin on Pip came heaving up,  
And found his pack spread out at check.  
"I'd like to wring your terrier's neck,"  
He said, "you see? He's spoiled our sport.  
He's killed the scent." He broke off short,  
And stared at hounds and at the valley.  
No jay or magpie gave a rally  
Down in the copse, no circling rooks  
Rose over fields; old Joyful's looks  
Were doubtful in the gorse, the pack  
Quested both up and down and back.  
He watched each hound for each small sign.  
They tried, but could not hit the line,  
The scent was gone. The field took place  
Out of the way of hounds. The pace  
Had tailed them out; though four remained;  
Sir Peter, on White Rabbit, stained  
Red from the brooks, Bill Ridden cheery,  
Hugh Colway with his mare dead weary,  
The Colonel with Marauder beat.  
They turned towards a thud of feet;  
Dansey, and then young Cothill came  
(His chestnut mare was galloped tame).  
"There's Copse a field behind," he said.  
"Those last miles put them all to bed.  
They're strung along the downs like flies."  
Copse and Nob Manor topped the rise.  
"Thank God! A check," they said, "at last."

\* \* \* \* \*

"They cannot own it; you must cast,"  
Sir Peter said. The soft horn blew,  
Tom turned the hounds upwind. They drew  
Upwind, downhill, by spinney-side.  
They tried the brambled ditch; they tried  
The swamp, all choked with bright green grass  
And clumps of rush, and pools like glass,  
Long since the dead men's drinking pond.  
They tried the white-leaved oak beyond,



But no hound spoke to it or feathered.  
 The horse-heads drooped like horses tethered,  
 The men mopped brows. "An hour's hard run.  
 Ten miles," they said, "we must have done.  
 It's all of six from Colston's Gorses."  
 The lucky got their second horses.

\* \* \* \* \*

The time ticked by. "He's lost," they muttered.  
 A pheasant rose. A rabbit scuttered.  
 Men mopped their scarlet cheeks and drank.  
 They drew downwind along the bank  
 (The Wan Way) on the hill's south spur,  
 Grown with dwarf oak and juniper,  
 Like dwarves alive, but no hound spoke.  
 The seepings made the ground one soak.  
 They turned the spur; the hounds were beat.  
 Then Robin shifted in his seat  
 Watching for signs, but no signs showed.  
 "I'll lift across the Godsdow Road  
 Beyond the spinney," Robin said.  
 Tom turned them; Robin went ahead.

\* \* \* \* \*

Beyond the copse a great grass fallow  
 Stretched towards Stoke and Cheddesdon Mallow,  
 A rolling grass where hounds grew keen.  
 "Yoi doit, then! This is where he's been,"  
 Said Robin, eager at their joy.  
 "Yooi, Joyful, lad! Yooi, Cornerboy!  
 They're on to him."

At his reminders

The keen hounds hurried to the finders.  
 The finding hounds began to hurry,  
 Men jammed their hats, prepared to scurry.  
 The "Ai, Ai," of the cry began,  
 Its spirit passed to horse and man;  
 The skirting hounds romped to the cry.  
 Hound after hound cried "Ai, Ai, Ai,"  
 Till all were crying, running, closing,  
 Their heads well up and no heads nosing.  
 Joyful ahead with spear-straight stern  
 They raced the great slope to the burn.

Robin beside them. Tom behind  
Pointing past Robin down the wind.

\* \* \* \*

For there, two furlongs on, he viewed  
On Holy Hill or Cheddesdon Rood,  
Just where the ploughland joined the grass,  
A speck down the first furrow pass,  
A speck the colour of the plough.

"Yonder he goes. We'll have him now,"  
He cried. The speck passed slowly on,  
It reached the ditch, paused, and was gone.

\* \* \* \*

Then down the slope and up the Rood  
Went the hunt's gallop. Godsdow Wood  
Dropped its last oak-leaves at the rally.  
Over the Rood to High Clench Valley  
The gallop led; the redcoats scattered,  
The fragments of the hunt were tattered  
Over five fields, ev'n since the check.

"A dead fox or a broken neck,"  
Said Robin Dawe. "Come up, the Dane."

The hunter lent against the rein,  
Cocking his ears; he loved to see  
The hounds at cry. The hounds and he  
The chiefs in all that feast of pace.

\* \* \* \*

The speck in front began to race.

The fox heard hounds get on to his line,  
And again the terror went down his spine;  
Again the back of his neck felt cold,  
From the sense of the hounds' teeth taking hold.  
But his legs were rested, his heart was good,  
He had breath to gallop to Mourne End Wood;  
It was four miles more, but an earth at end,  
So he put on pace down the Rood Hill Bend.

\* \* \* \*

Down the great grass slope which the oak-trees dot,  
With a swerve to the right from the keeper's cot,  
Over High Clench Brook in its channel deep  
To the grass beyond, where he ran to sheep.

\* \* \* \*

The sheep formed line like a troop of horse,  
 They swerved, as he passed, to front his course.  
 From behind, as he ran, a cry arose:  
 "See the sheep there. Watch them. There he goes!"

\* \* \* \* \*

He ran the sheep that their smell might check  
 The hounds from his scent and save his neck,  
 But in two fields more he was made aware  
 That the hounds still ran; Tom had viewed him there.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tom had held them on through the taint of sheep;  
 They had kept his line, as they meant to keep.  
 They were running hard with a burning scent,  
 And Robin could see which way he went.  
 The pace that he went brought strain to breath,  
 He knew as he ran that the grass was death.

\* \* \* \* \*

He ran the slope towards Morton Tew  
 That the heave of the hill might stop the view,  
 Then he doubled down to the Blood Brook red,  
 And swerved upstream in the brook's deep bed.  
 He splashed the shallows, he swam the deeps,  
 He crept by banks as a moorhen creeps;  
 He heard the hounds shoot over his line,  
 And go on, on, on, towards Cheddesdon Zine.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the minute's peace he could slacken speed,  
 The ease from the strain was sweet indeed.  
 Cool to the pads the water flowed.  
 He reached the bridge on the Cheddesdon Road.

\* \* \* \* \*

As he came to light from the culvert dim  
 Two boys on the bridge looked down on him;  
 They were young Bill Ripple and Harry Meun;  
 "Look, there be squirrel, a-swimmin', see 'un?"

"Noa, ben't a squirrel, be fox, be fox.  
 Now, Hal, get pebble, we'll give 'en socks."  
 "Get pebble, Billy, dub 'un a plaster;  
 There 's for thy belly, I'll learn 'ee, master."

\*  \* \* \* \* \*

The stones splashed spray in the fox's eyes,  
 He raced from brook in a burst of shies,  
 He ran for the reeds in the withy car,  
 Where the dead flags shake and the wild-duck are.

\* \* \* \* \*

He pushed through the reeds, which cracked at his passing,  
 To the High Clench Water, a grey pool glassing;  
 He heard Bill Ripple, in Cheddesdon Road,  
 Shout, "This way, huntsmen, it 's here he goed."

\* \* \* \* \*

Then "Leu, Leu, Leu," went the soft horn's laughter,  
 The hounds (they had checked) came romping after;  
 The clop of the hooves on the road was plain,  
 Then the crackle of reeds, then cries again.

\* \* \* \* \*

A whimpering first, then Robin's cheer,  
 Then the "Ai, Ai, Ai"; they were all too near,  
 His swerve had brought but a minute's rest;  
 Now he ran again, and he ran his best.

\* \* \* \* \*

With a crackle of dead dry stalks of reed  
 The hounds came romping at topmost speed;  
 The redcoats ducked as the great hooves skittered  
 The Blood Brook's shallows to sheets that glittered;  
 With a cracking whip and a "Hoik, Hoik, Hoik,  
 Forrard!" Tom galloped. Bob shouted "Yoick!"  
 Like a running fire the dead reeds crackled;  
 The hounds' heads lifted, their necks were hackled.  
 Tom cried to Bob, as they thundered through,  
 "He is running short, we shall kill at Tew."  
 Bob cried to Tom as they rode in team,  
 "I was sure, that time, that he turned upstream.  
 As the hounds went over the brook in stride  
 I saw old Daffodil fling to side,  
 So I guessed at once, when they checked beyond."

\* \* \* \* \*

The ducks flew up from the Morton Pond;  
 The fox looked up at their tailing strings,  
 He wished (perhaps) that a fox had wings.

Wings with his friends in a great V straining  
The autumn sky when the moon is gaining;  
For better the grey sky's solitude  
Then to be two miles from the Mourne End Wood  
With the hounds behind, clean-trained to run,  
And your strength half spent and your breath half done.  
Better the reeds and the sky and water  
Than that hopeless pad from a certain slaughter.  
At the Morton Pond the fields began—  
Long Tew's green meadows; he ran, he ran.

First the six green fields that make a mile,  
With the lip-ful Clench at the side the while,  
With rooks above, slow-circling, showing  
The world of men where a fox was going;  
The fields all empty, dead grass, bare hedges,  
And the brook's bright gleam in the dark of sedges.  
To all things else he was dumb and blind;  
He ran with the hounds a field behind.

At the sixth green field came the long slow climb  
To the Mourne End Wood, as old as time;  
Yew woods dark, where they cut for bows,  
Oak woods green with the mistletoes,  
Dark woods evil, but burrowed deep  
With a brock's earth strong, where a fox might sleep.  
He saw his point on the heaving hill,  
He had failing flesh and a reeling will;  
He felt the heave of the hill grow stiff,  
He saw black woods, which would shelter—if  
Nothing else, but the steepening slope  
And a black line nodding, a line of hope—  
The line of the yews on the long slope's brow,  
A mile, three-quarters, a half-mile now.

A quarter-mile, but the hounds had viewed;  
They yelled to have him this side the wood.  
Robin capped them. Tom Dansey steered them;  
With a "Yooi, Yooi! Yooi!" Bill Ridden cheered them.

Then up went hackles as Shatterer led.  
 "Mob him!" cried Ridden, "the wood 's ahead.  
 Turn him, damn it! Yooi! beauties, beat him,  
 O God, let them get him: let them eat him!  
 O God!" said Ridden, "I'll eat him stewed,  
 If you'll let us get him this side the wood."

\* \* \* \* \*

But the pace, uphill, made a horse like stone;  
 The pack went wild up the hill alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three hundred yards and the worst was past,  
 The slope was gentler and shorter-grassed;  
 The fox saw the bulk of the woods grow tall  
 On the brae ahead, like a barrier-wall.  
 He saw the skeleton trees show sky  
 And the yew-trees darken to see him die,  
 And the line of the woods go reeling black:  
 There was hope in the woods—and behind, the pack.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two hundred yards and the trees grew taller,  
 Blacker, blinder, as hope grew smaller;  
 Cry seemed nearer, the teeth seemed gripping,  
 Pulling him back; his pads seemed slipping.  
 He was all one ache, one gasp, one thirsting,  
 Heart on his chest-bones, beating, bursting;  
 The hounds were gaining like spotted pards,  
 And the wood hedge still was a hundred yards.

\* \* \* \* \*

The wood hedge black was a two-year, quick  
 Cut-and-laid that had sprouted thick  
 Thorns all over and strongly plied.  
 With a clean red ditch on the take-off side.

He saw it now as a redness, topped  
 With a wattle of thorn-work spiky cropped,  
 Spiky to leap on, stiff to force,  
 No safe jump for a failing horse;  
 But beyond it darkness of yews together,  
 Dark green plumes over soft brown feather,

Darkness of woods where scents were blowing—  
 Strange scents, hot scents, of wild things going,  
 Scents that might draw these hounds away.  
 So he ran, ran, ran to that clean red clay.

Still, as he ran, his pads slipped back,  
 All his strength seemed to draw the pack,  
 The trees drew over him dark like Norns,  
 He was over the ditch and at the thorns.

He thrust at the thorns, which would not yield;  
 He leaped, but fell, in sight of the field.  
 The hounds went wild as they saw him fall,  
 The fence stood stiff like a Bucks flint wall.

He gathered himself for a new attempt;  
 His life before was an old dream dreamt,  
 All that he was was a blown fox quaking,  
 Jumping at thorns too stiff for breaking,  
 While over the grass in crowd, in cry,  
 Came the grip teeth grinning to make him die,  
 The eyes intense, dull, smouldering red,  
 The fell like a ruff round each keen head,  
 The pace like fire, and scarlet men  
 Galloping, yelling, "Yooi, eat him, then!"

\* \* \* \*

He gathered himself, he leaped, he reached  
 The top of the hedge like a fish-boat beached.  
 He steadied a second and then leaped down  
 To the dark of the wood where bright things drown.

\* \* \* \*

He swerved, sharp right, under young green firs.  
 Robin called on the Dane with spurs.  
 He cried, "Come, Dansey; if God's not good,  
 We shall change our fox in this Mourne End Wood."  
 Tom cried back as he charged like spate,  
 "Mine can't jump that, I must ride to gate."  
 Robin answered, "I'm going at him.  
 I'll kill that fox, if it kills me, drat him!

We'll kill in covert. Gerr on, now, Dane."  
He gripped him tight and he made it plain,  
He slowed him down till he almost stood,  
While his hounds went crash into Mourne End Wood.

Like a dainty dancer, with footing nice  
The Dane turned side for a leap in twice.  
He cleared the ditch to the red clay bank,  
He rose at the fence as his quarters sank,  
He barged the fence as the bank gave way,  
And down he came in a fall of clay.

\* \* \* \*

Robin jumped off him and gasped for breath.  
He said, "That's lost him as sure as death.  
They've overrun him. Come up, the Dane.  
We'll kill him yet, if we ride to Spain."

\* \* \* \*

He scrambled up to his horse's back,  
He thrust through cover, he called his pack;  
He cheered them on till they made it good,  
Where the fox had swerved inside the wood.

The fox knew well as he ran the dark,  
That the headlong hounds were past their mark;  
They had missed his swerve and had overrun,  
But their devilish play was not yet done.

\* \* \* \*

For a minute he ran and heard no sound,  
Then a whimper came from a questing hound,  
Then a "This way, beauties," and then "Leu, Leu,"  
The floating laugh of the horn that blew.  
Then the cry again, and the crash and rattle  
Of the shrubs burst back as they ran to battle,  
Till the wood behind seemed risen from root,  
Crying and crashing, to give pursuit,  
Till the trees seemed hounds and the air seemed cry,  
And the earth so far that he needs must die,  
Die where he reeled in the woodland dim,  
With a hound's white grips in the spine of him.



For one more burst he could spurt, and then  
Wait for the teeth, and the wrench, and men.

\* \* \* \*

He made his spurt for the Mourne End rocks  
The air blew rank with the taint of fox;  
The yews gave way to a greener space  
Of great stone strewn in a grassy place.  
And there was his earth at the great grey shoulder  
Sunk in the ground, of a granite boulder.  
A dry, deep burrow with rocky roof,  
Proof against crowbars, terrier-proof,  
Life to the dying, rest for bones.

\* \* \* \*

The earth was stopped; it was filled with stones.

\* \* \* \*

Then, for a moment, his courage failed,  
His eyes looked up as his body quailed,  
Then the coming of death, which all things dread,  
Made him run for the wood ahead.

\* \* \* \*

The taint of fox was rank on the air,  
He knew, as he ran, there were foxes there.  
His strength was broken, his heart was bursting,  
His bones were rotten, his throat was thirsting;  
His feet were reeling, his brush was thick  
From dragging the mud, and his brain was sick.

\* \* \* \*

He thought as he ran of his old delight  
In the wood in the moon in an April night,  
His happy hunting, his winter loving,  
The smells of things in the midnight roving,  
The look of his dainty-nosing, red,  
Clean-felled dam with her footpad's tread;  
Of his sire, so swift, so game, so cunning,  
With craft in his brain and power of running;  
Their fights of old when his teeth drew blood,  
Now he was sick, with his coat all mud.

\* \* \* \*

He crossed the covert, he crawled the bank,  
To a meuse in the thorns, and there he sank,  
With his ears flexed back and his teeth shown white,  
In a rat's resolve for a dying bite.

\* \* \* \* \*

And there, as he lay, he saw the vale,  
That a struggling sunlight silvered pale:  
The Deerlip Brook like a strip of steel,  
The Nun's Wood Yews where the rabbits squeal,  
The great grass square of the Roman Fort,  
And the smoke in the elms at Crendon Court.

\* \* \* \* \*

And above the smoke in the elm-tree tops  
Was the beech-clump's blur, Blown Hilcote Copse,  
Where he and his mates had long made merry  
In the bloody joys of the rabbit-herry.

\* \* \* \* \*

And there as he lay and looked, the cry  
Of the hounds at head came rousing by;  
He bent his bones in the blackthorn dim.

\* \* \* \* \*

But the cry of the hounds was not for him.  
Over the fence with a crash they went,  
Belly to grass, with a burning scent;  
Then came Dansey, yelling to Bob:  
"They've changed! Oh, damn it! now here 's a job."  
And Bob yelled back: "Well, we cannot turn 'em,  
It 's Jumper and Antic, Tom, we'll learn 'em!  
We must just go on, and I hope we kill."  
They followed hounds down the Mourne End Hill.

\* \* \* \* \*

The fox lay still in the rabbit-meuse,  
On the dry brown dust of the plumes of yews.  
In the bottom below a brook went by,  
Blue, in a patch, like a streak of sky.  
There one by one, with a clink of stone,  
Came a red or dark coat on a horse half-blown.  
And man to man with a gasp for breath  
Said: "Lord, what a run! I'm fagged to death."

\* \* \* \* \*

After an hour no riders came,  
 The day drew by like an ending game;  
 A robin sang from a pufft red breast,  
 The fox lay quiet and took his rest.  
 A wren on a tree-stump carolled clear,  
 Then the starlings wheeled in a sudden sheer,  
 The rooks came home to the twiggy hive  
 In the elm-tree tops which the winds do drive.  
 Then the noise of the rooks fell slowly still,  
 And the lights came out in the Clench Brook Mill;  
 Then a pheasant cocked, then an owl began,  
 With the cry that curdles the blood of man.

\* \* \* \* \*

The stars grew bright as the yews grew black,  
 The fox rose stiffly and stretched his back.  
 He flaired the air, then he padded out  
 To the valley below him, dark as doubt,  
 Winter-thin with the young green crops,  
 For old Cold Crendon and Hilcote Copse.

\* \* \* \* \*

As he crossed the meadows at Naunton Larking  
 The dogs in the town all started barking,  
 For with feet all bloody and flanks all foam,  
 The hounds and the hunt were limping home;  
 Limping home in the dark dead-beaten,  
 The hounds all rank from a fox they'd eaten.  
 Dansey saying to Robin Dawe:  
 "The fastest and longest I ever saw."  
 And Robin answered: "Oh, Tom, 'twas good!  
 I thought they'd changed in the Mourne End Wood,  
 But now I feel that they did not change.  
 We've had a run that was great and strange;  
 And to kill in the end, at dusk, on grass!  
 We'll turn to the Cock and take a glass,  
 For the hounds, poor souls! are past their forces;  
 And a gallon of ale for our poor horses,  
 And some bits of bread for the hounds, poor things!  
 After all they've done (for they've done like kings)  
 Would keep them going till we get in.  
 We had it alone from Nun's Wood Whin."

Then Tom replied: "If they changed or not,  
There've been few runs longer and none more hot,  
We shall talk of to-day until we die."

\* \* \* \*

The stars grew bright in the winter sky,  
The wind came keen with a tang of frost,  
The brook was troubled for new things lost,  
The copse was happy for old things found,  
The fox came home and he went to ground.

\* \* \* \*

And the hunt came home and the hounds were fed,  
They climbed to their bench and went to bed;  
The horses in stable loved their straw.  
"Good-night, my beauties," said Robin Dawe.

\* \* \* \*

Then the moon came quiet and flooded full  
Light and beauty on clouds like wool,  
On a feasted fox at rest from hunting,  
In the beech-wood grey where the brocks were grunting.

\* \* \* \*

The beech-wood grey rose dim in the night  
With moonlight fallen in pools of light,  
The long dead leaves on the ground were rimed;  
A clock struck twelve and the church-bells chimed.



ENSLAVED  
AND OTHER POEMS



## ENSLAVED

**A**LL early in the April, when daylight comes at five  
I went into the garden most glad to be alive;  
The thrushes and the blackbirds were singing in the thorn,  
The April flowers were singing for joy of being born.

I smelt the dewy morning come blowing through the woods  
Where all the wilding cherries do toss their snowy snoods;  
I thought of the running water where sweet white violets  
grow.  
I said: "I'll pick them for her, because she loves them so."

So in the dewy morning I turned to climb the hill  
Beside the running water whose tongue is never still.  
Oh, delicate green and dewy were all the budding trees;  
The blue dog-violets grew there, and many primroses.

Out of the wood I wandered, but paused upon the heath  
To watch, beyond the tree-tops, the wrinkled sea beneath;  
Its blueness and its stillness were trembling as it lay  
In the old un-autumned beauty that never goes away.

And the beauty of the water brought my love into my  
mind,  
Because all sweet love is beauty, and the loved thing turns  
to kind;  
And I thought, "It is a beauty spread for setting of your  
grace,  
O white violet of a woman with the April in your face."

So I gathered the white violets where young men pick them  
still,  
And I turned to cross the woodland to her house beneath  
the hill,



And I thought of her delight in the flowers that I brought  
her,  
Bright like sunlight, sweet like singing, cool like running of  
the water.

Now I noticed, as I crossed the wood towards my lady's  
house,  
That wisps of smoke were blowing blue in the young green  
of the boughs:  
But I thought, "They're burning weeds," and I felt the green  
and blue  
To be lovely, so, together, while the green was in its  
dew.

Then I smelt the smell of burning; but I thought: "The  
bonfire takes,  
And the tongues of flame are licking up below the lifting  
flakes."  
Though, I thought, "The fire must be big, to raise a smoke  
so thick."  
And I wondered for a moment if the fire were a rick.

But the love that sang within me made me put the thought  
away,  
What do young men care for trouble if they see their love  
to-day?  
And my thought kept running forward till it knelt before  
my sweet,  
Laying thought and joy and service in a love-gift at her  
feet.

And I thought of life beside her, and of all our days  
together,  
Stormy days, perhaps, of courage, with our faces to the  
weather,  
Never any days but happy, so I thought, if passed with  
her.  
Then the smoke came blowing thickly till it made the wood  
a blur.

Still, I did not think of evil, for one could not, living there.  
But I said, "The rooks are startled," for their crying filled  
the air,  
And I wondered, in the meadow, why the cows were not at  
grass—  
Only smoke, down-blowing, bitter, that the birds were loath  
to pass.

So I quickened through the meadow to the close that hid  
the home,  
And the smoke drove down in volleys, lifted up, and wreathed,  
and clomb,  
And I could not see because of it, and what one cannot see  
Holds the fear that lives in darkness, so that fear began in  
me.

And the place was like a death-house save for cawings  
overhead,  
All the cocks and hens were silent and the dogs were like  
the dead:  
Nothing but the smoke seemed living, thick, and hiding  
whence it came,  
Bitter with the change of burning hot upon the cheek from  
flame.

Then my fear became a terror, and I knew what I had  
fallen  
From the fate that comes unthought-of when the unheard  
word is callen,  
So I flung the little gate astray and burst the bushes through;  
Little red-white blossoms flecked me, and my face was dashed  
with dew.

Then I saw what ill had fallen, for the house had burned to  
death,  
Though it gleamed with running fire when a falling gave a  
breath;  
All the roof was sky, the lead dripped, all the empty windows  
wide  
Spouted smoke, and all was silent, save the volleying rooks  
that cried.

This I saw. I rocked with anguish at the flicking heap that  
glowed.  
/ She was dead among the ashes that the lead drops did  
corrode;  
She was dead, that gave a meaning to the beauty of the  
spring,  
Yet the daffodils still nodded and the blackbirds still did  
sing.

When the stunning passed, I stumbled to the house's west-  
ward side,  
Thinking there to find some neighbour that could tell me  
how she died;  
Fearing, too, lest Death the devil who had dealt such murder  
there  
Should be hiding there behind me for to clutch me unaware.

There was no one there alive, but my leaping heart was  
stilled  
By the sight of bodies lying in the grass where they were  
killed;  
Drooped into the grass they lay there, pressing close into the  
ground  
As the dead do, in the grasses; all my world went spinning  
round.

Then I saw that, with the bodies, all the ground was heaped  
and strown  
With the litter of a house that had been gutted to the bone;  
Split and hingeless coffers yawning, linen drooped like people  
dead,  
Trinkets broken for their jewels, barrels staved, and crusts  
of bread.

Then a mass of feathers blowing, then the cattle's heads; and  
then,  
Stunned at all this wreck, I hurried to the bodies of the  
men.  
Five were workers of the household, lying dead in her defence:  
Roused from sleep, perhaps, in darkness so that death might  
dash them thence.

But the other three were strangers, swarthy, bearded, hook-nosed, lean,  
Wearing white (for night surprisal) over seamen's coats of green;  
Moorish-coloured men, still greedy for the prize they d'ed to snatch;  
Clutching broken knives, or grass-blades, or some tatters of their catch.

Then I moaned aloud, for then I knew the truth, that these  
Were the Moorish pirate raiders who had come there from the seas,  
Come upon my love defenceless, by surprise, and I not there:  
Come to burn or kill her beauty, or to drag her to their lair.

"Dragged away to be a slave," I thought; I saw what she had seen,  
All the good friends lying slaughtered in the young grass dewy-green;  
All the cattle killed for provant and the gutted homestead burning,  
And the skinny Moors to drag her to the death of no returning.

Minutes passed, yet still I stood there, when I heard one call my name.  
Amys, once my darling's woman, from her hiding-corner came,  
"Oh," she cried, "they came upon us when the light was growing grey,  
And they sacked and burned and slaughtered, and they've carried her away.

"I was sleeping in the cottage when I heard the noise of men,  
And the shots; and I could see them, for the house was blazing then.  
They were like to devils, killing; so I hid, and then I heard Rollo moaning in the bushes with a face as white as curd.

"He was dying from a bullet, but he said 'Saffee! Saffee Pirates, Amys! They were burning, and they shot and murdered me.

Amys, look where I was murdered! look, they blew away my side;

And they burnt the cows in stable.' Then he moaned until he died.

"It was terrible to watch them kill the beasts and sort the gear.

Then they shouldered up the plunder, that was worth their coming here.

And they took my lady with them as a slave-girl to be sold. But I saw them kill Paloma—they said that she was old.

Then they went aboard the cruiser, and at once she sailed away;

Look beyond, and you can see her; she is still within the bay——"

There she was, a beaky galley, with her oar-blades slashing spray.

\* \* \* \* \*

There they carried my beloved in a pirate-ship at sea  
To be sold, like meat for killing, in the markets of Saffee.  
Little, fire-shrivelled oak-leaves lightly blew across my face.  
And a burnt-through rafter falling made the fire roar apace.

Then I walked down to the water; and my heart was torn in two

For the anguish of her future and the nothing I could do.  
The ship had leaned a little as she snouted to the spray;  
The feathering oars flashed steadily at taking her away.

I took a fisher's boat there was and dragged her down the sand,

I set her sail and took an oar and thrust her from the land,

I headed for the pirate, and the brown weed waved beneath,  
And the boat trod down the bubbles of the bone between  
her teeth.

I brought them down the land-wind, so from the first I  
gained.

I set a tiny topsail that bowed her till she strained.  
My mind was with my darling aboard that ship of fear,  
In cabin close with curtains, where Moormen watched my  
dear.

Now when they saw me coming they wondered what it  
meant,  
This young man in a fish-boat who followed where they  
went,  
They judged that I was coming to buy the woman free;  
So suddenly the oars stopped, they waited on the sea.

I dropped my sail close to them and ranged to easy hail;  
Her plunges shivered wrinklins along her spilling sail,  
The water running by her had made her shine like gold,  
The oar-blades poised in order kissed water when she rolled.

A hundred naked rowers stared down their oars at me  
With all the bitter hatred the slave has for the free.  
The boatswain walked above them; he mocked me, so did  
they.  
The sun had burnt their bodies, and yet their look was  
grey.

So there we rocked together, while she, at every roll,  
Moaned from her guns with creakings that shook her to the  
soul.  
I did not see my darling; she lay in ward below,  
Down in the green-hung cabin she first joined hands with  
woe.

The galley plowtered, troubling; the mockings of the slaves  
Passed from bench to bench, like birds' cries; her bow-beak  
slapt the waves,

Then her captain came on deck, quick and hard, with snapping force,  
And a kind of cringe of terror stiffened down those banks  
of oars.

The captain walked the deck; he eyed me for a moment,  
He called some Turkish words with a muttered added  
comment;  
Then he called, "Well. What d'ye want?" in the lingua of  
the sea.  
The boatswain leaned and spoke, then they sneered and  
looked at me.

So I stood upon the thwart, and I called, "I want to come  
To be comrade to the woman whom you've dragged away  
from home.  
Since I cannot set her free, I want only to be near her."  
"Ah," he said, "men buy love dear, but by God! you buy  
it dearer.

"Well, you shall;" he spoke in Moorish, and a seaman tossed  
a cord,  
So I hove myself alongside, scrambled up and climbed aboard.  
All were silent, but they watched me; all those eyes above  
the oars  
Stared, and all their bitter tushes gnashed beneath them like  
a boar's.

At an order, all the oars clanked aft, and checked, and sliced  
the sea,  
The rowers' lips twitched upward, the sheets tugged to be  
free,  
The wrinklins in the sail ran up as it rounded to a breast,  
The ship bowed to a billow and snouted through the crest.

My boat was tossed behind us, she bowed and swung away.  
The captain stood and mocked me: "Well, since you would,  
you may.  
You shall be near your lady, until we fetch to port,"  
They chained me to the oar-loom upon the after-thwart.

All day, until the twilight, I swung upon the oar;  
Above the dropping taffrail I sometimes saw the shore.  
Behind me swung the rowers: again and yet again  
A gasp, a clank of rollocks, and then a cry of pain.

The boatswain walked above us to lash us if we slackened;  
With blood of many beatings the rowers' backs were  
blackened:

Again and yet again came the lash, and then the cry,  
Then a mutter for revenge would run round the ship and  
die.

But twilight with her planet that brings quiet to the tired,  
Bringing dusk upon the water, brought the gift that I  
desired;

For they brought my well-beloved to the deck to breathe  
the air,

Not a half an oar's length from me, so we spoke together  
there.

"You," she said. "Yes, I, beloved, to be near you over-sea.  
I have come to be beside you and to help to set you free.  
Keep your courage, and be certain that the God who took  
will give.

God will dawn, and we shall prosper, for the living soul will  
live."

Then they bade me stop my talking and to use my breath  
to row.

Darkness came upon the water, and they took my love below.  
Fire in the oar-stirred water swirled in streaks that raced  
away;

Toppling up and down, the taffrail touched the red sky and  
the grey.

Then the wind began to freshen till the shrouds were  
twanging sharp,

Thrilling an unchanging honing like a madman with a harp,



Thrilling on a rising water that was hissing as it rose  
To be foamed asunder by us as we struck it down with blows.

Soon we could not row, but rested with out oar blades triced  
above;  
Then my soul went from my body to give comfort to my  
love,  
Though, indeed, the only comfort that my mind could find  
to say  
Was, that God, who makes to-morrow, makes it better than  
to-day.

So I yearned towards my darling while I drooped upon my  
bench.  
All the galley's length was shaken when the mainsail gave  
a wrench;  
Always when I roused, the taffrail toppled up to touch the  
stars,  
And the roaring seas ran hissing, and the planks whined, and  
the spars.

Day by day I rowed the galley, night by night I saw the  
Pole  
Sinking lower in the northward, to the sorrow of my soul;  
Yet at night I saw my darling when she came on deck to  
walk,  
And our thoughts passed to each other though they would not  
let us talk.

Till early on a morning, before the dawn had come,  
Some foreign birds came crying with strong wings wagging  
home.  
Then on the wind a warmness, a sweetness as of cloves,  
Blew faintly in the darkness from spice and orange groves.

Then, as they set us rowing, the sun rose over land  
That seemed a mist of forest above a gleam of sand.  
White houses glittered on it; the pirates cheered to see.  
By noon we reached the haven, we anchored in Saffee.

They cloaked my well-beloved and carried her ashore;  
She slipped a paper to me while brushing past my oar.  
I took it muttering, "Courage!" I read it when I dared:  
"They mean me for the Khalif. I have to be prepared."

They led her up the jetty, she passed out of my sight.  
Then they knocked away our irons, and worked us till the  
night  
Unbending sails, unstepping masts, clean-scraping banks,  
unshipping oars,  
Rousing casks and loot and cables from the orlop into stores.

When all the gear was warehoused, they marched us up the  
street—  
All sand it was, where dogs lay that sprang and snapped our  
feet.  
Then lancers came at gallop, they knocked us to the side,  
They struck us with their lance-staves to make them room  
to ride.

Then, as we cleared the roadway, with clatter, riding hard,  
With foam flung from the bit-cups, there came the body-  
guard;  
Then splendid in his scarlet the Khalif's self went by,  
A grand young bird of rapine with a hawk-look in his eye.

A slave said: "There's the Khalif. He's riding north to-night,  
To Marrakesh, the vineyard, his garden of delight.  
That means a night of quiet to us poor dogs who row;  
The guards will take their pleasure, and we shall rest below."

Then, in the dusk, they marched us to the quarries of the  
slaves,  
Which were dripping shafts in limestone giving passage into  
caves.  
There they left us with our rations to the night that prisoners  
know,  
Longing after what was happy far away and long ago.

Now often, as I rowed upon the bench,  
In tugging back the oar-loom in the stroke,  
A rower opposite, whose face was French,  
Had signalled to me, with a cheer or joke,  
Grinning askant, and tossing back his hair  
To show his white, keen features debonair.

And now that I was sitting on the stone,  
He came to where I sat, and sat beside.  
"So," he exclaimed, "you eat your heart alone  
/ I did, at first; but prison kills the pride.  
It kills the heart, and all it has to give  
Is hatred, daunted by the will to live.

"I was a courtier in the French King's court  
Three years ago; you would not think it now,  
To see me rower in a pirate port  
Rusting my chain with sweatings from my brow.  
But I was once Duhamel, over-sea,  
And should be still, if they would ransom me.

"I honour you for coming as you did  
To save your lady. It was nobly done.  
They took her for the Khalif; she is hid  
There in the woman's palace; but, my son,  
You will not look upon her face again.  
Best face the fact, whatever be the pain.

"No, do not speak, for she is lost forever,  
Hidden in that dark palace of the King  
Not all the loving in the world would ever  
Bring word to her, or help, or anything.  
She will be pasture to the King's desires,  
Then sold, or given in barter, when he tires.

"A woman in the Khalif's house is dead  
To all the world forever; that is truth.  
And you (most gallantly) have put your head  
Into the trap. Till you have done with youth  
You will be slave, in prison or at sea.  
Sickness or death alone will set you free."

"Surely," I said, "since people have escaped  
From worser hells than this, I, too, might try.  
Fate, that is given to all men partly shaped,  
Is man's, to alter daily till he die.  
I mean to try to save her. Things which men  
Mean with their might, succeed, as this will then."

I saw him look about him with alarm.  
"Oh, not so loud," he said, "for there are spies."  
His look of tension passed, he caught my arm.  
"I think none heard," he said, "but oh! be wise.  
Slaves have been ganché upon the hooks for less.  
This place has devilries men cannot guess.

"But no man ever has escaped from here.  
To talk of it is death; your friend and you  
Are slaves for life, and after many a year  
(At best), when you are both too old to do  
The work of slaves, you may be flung abroad,  
To beg for broken victuals in the road."

I saw that what he said was certainty.  
I knew it even then, but answered: "Well,  
I will at least be near her till I die,  
And Life is change, and no man can foretell.  
Even if thirty years hence we may meet  
It is worth while, and prison shall be sweet."

He looked at me with pleasure; then he sighed  
And said: "Well, you deserve her." Then he stared  
Across the quarry, trying to decide  
If I were fit to see his spirit bared.  
Quick glances of suspicion and distrust  
Searched at my face, and then he said: "I must!

"I must not doubt you, lad, so listen now.  
I have a plan, myself, for leaving this.  
I meant to try to-night; I'll show you how  
To save your lady. And to-night there is  
Hope, for the Khalif sleeps at Marrakesh.  
When knots are loosened fish can burst the mesh."

So eagerly I plighted faith to try  
That very night to help him. "If we fail,"  
He said, "it will be Fate, who flings the die  
Against which nothing mortal can avail.  
But we are desperate men whose throws succeed,  
Being one with Fate, or Change from Passionate Need."

So we agreed, that, when the cave was still,  
We would attempt, and having broken prison,  
Would raid the woman's palace on the hill,  
And save my lady ere the sun was risen;  
Then put to sea towards some hiding-place  
North, in the shoals, where galleys could not chase.

Even as we made an end, another slave  
(They called him English Gerard) joined us there.  
Often, upon the toppling of a wave,  
I'd seen him rowing and had heard him swear.  
Forceful he was, with promise in his eye  
Of rough capacity and liberty.

"Still talking of escape, I'll bet a crown,"  
He said to me. "But you are young, my friend.  
We oldsters know we cannot leave the town,  
We shall be here until the bitter end.  
Give up the hope, lad; better let it be;  
No slave has ever broken from Saffee.

"Inland there 's desert, westward there 's the sea,  
Northward the Moorish towns, and in the south  
Swamps and the forest to eternity.  
The young colt jibs at iron in his mouth  
But has to take it, and the fact for us  
Is, that we're slaves, and have to linger thus."

"Just what I told him," said Duhamel, "just  
My very words. It 's bitter but the truth.  
We shall be slaves until we turn to dust;  
Your lady, too, until she loses youth.  
Put hope aside, and make what life you can  
Being a slave, for slave you are, young man."

"Perhaps," said Gerard, "you were told what comes  
Of trying to escape, for men have tried.  
They only added to their martyrdoms.  
Two got away at Christmas, but they died.  
The one they skinned and stuffed; the other hangs  
Still, near the gate, upon the ganches' fangs.

"How were they caught?" I asked. "They were betrayed,"  
Said Gerard. "How? By whom? I cannot tell.  
They trusted someone with the plans they made,  
And he betrayed them, like a fiend from hell.  
How do I know it? Well, they left no trace,  
And yet the lancers knew their hiding-place.

"They went straight to it, straight, and caught them there  
As soon as daylight came, when they had gone  
(As you'll be taken if you don't beware).  
They keep great hooks to hang the bodies on  
Of those who run away, or try, for none  
Succeeds, nor can, so you be warned, my son."

He nodded to me, gripped my arm, and went  
Back to his place, the other side the cave.  
"That was a spy," Duhamel whispered, "sent  
To test your spirit as a new-come slave.  
I know the man, and if report speaks true  
He helped in that betrayal of the two.

"Now seem to sleep, and when the cave is quiet  
We two will try; they say God helps the mad.  
To be a slave to Moors is bitter diet  
That poisons men; two bitter years I've had,  
But before dawn we two will end it, lad.  
Now seem to sleep."

I cuddled to the stone;  
Yet Gerard's voice seemed calling to my bone.

And opening my eyes, I saw him there  
Looking intently at me, and he shook  
His head at me, as though to say, "Beware!"  
And frowned a passionate warning in a look.

A wind-flaw, blowing through the window, took  
 The flame within the lantern, that it shed  
 Bright light on him. Again he shook his head.

\* \* \* \* \*

The wind blowing in from the sea made the flame like a  
 plume;  
 The slaves, huddled close, cursed in whispers, with chattering  
 teeth;  
 The wolves of their spirits came stealthy to snarl in the  
 gloom  
 Over bones of their pleasures long-perished; the sea moaned  
 beneath.

And my heart glowed with joy that that night I might rescue  
 my love;  
 Glowed with joy in Duhamel, whose cunning would conquer  
 the guards.  
 The wind blew in fresher; a sentry went shuffling above;  
 Some gamblers crouched tense, while a lean hand flickered  
 the cards.

Then one by one the gamblers left their game,  
 The shadows shaken by the blowing flame  
 Winked on the wall until the lamp blew out.  
 Wrapping his ankle-irons in a clout  
 (To save his skin), each branded slave prepared  
 To take his sleep, his only comfort spared.

\* \* \* \* \*

A kind of clearness blowing from the night  
 Made sleepers' faces bonelike with its light.  
 A sleeper, moaning, twisted with his shoulder  
 Close to the limestone as the wind grew colder.  
 Trickle of water glistened down and splashed  
 Pools on the limestone into rings that flashed.  
 Often a stirring sleeper struck the bell  
 Of chain-links upon stones. Deep breathing fell  
 Like sighing, out of all that misery  
 Of vermined men who dreamed of being free.  
 Heavily on the beaches fell the sea.

Then, as the tide came in, the water seething  
 Under the quarries, mingled with the breathing,  
 Until the prison in the rocky-hewen  
 Seemed like a ship that trod the water's ruin,  
 Trampling the toppling sea, while water creeping  
 Splashed from the seams in darkness on men sleeping.  
 Far in the city all the dogs were howling  
 At that white bird the moon in heaven owling.  
 Out in the guard-house soldiers made a dither  
 About the wiry titter of a zither,  
 Their long-drawn songs were timed with clapping hands.

\* \* \* \* \*

The water hissed its life out on the sands.  
 The wheel of heaven with all her glittering turned,  
 The city window-lights no longer burned.  
 Then one by one the soldiers left their clatter;  
 The moon arose and walked upon the water,  
 The sleepers turned to screen her from their eyes.  
 A fishing-boat sailed past; the fishers' cries  
 Rang in the darkness of the bay without.  
 Her sail flapped as she creaked and stood about,  
 Then eased, then leaned, then strained and stood away.  
 Deep silence followed, save where breathers lay.

So, lying there, with all my being tense,  
 Prepared to strike, to take my lady thence,  
 A prompting bade me not to trust too far  
 This man Duhamel as a guiding star.  
 Some little thing in him had jarred on me;  
 A touch (the flesh being raw) hurts cruelly.  
 And something in his speech or in his bearing  
 Made me mistrust his steadiness in daring,  
 Or his endurance, or his faith to us.  
 Some smile or word made me distrustful thus.  
 Who knows the hidden things within our being  
 That prompt our brain to safety without seeing?  
 Hear the unheard, and save us without sense?  
 What fingers touch our strings when we are tense?

\* \* \* \* \*

Even at that point Duhamel crept to me,  
 And whispered, "Come, by morning we'll be free.



Creep down the passage there towards the entry;  
 See what the guards do while I time the sentry.  
 I think that all the guards are sleeping sound,  
 But—there 's his foot, one sentry goes his round.  
 And I must time him till I know his beat."  
 Loitering upon the rampart came the feet  
 Of some loose-slippered soldier. I could hear  
 Him halt, humming a tune, grounding his spear.

\* \* \* \* \*

I listened, while Duhamel urged me on.  
 "Hurry," he said, "the night will soon be gone;  
 Watch from the passage what the guards are doing:  
 I'll time the sentry. There'll be no pursuing  
 If we can pass the guards with him away.  
 Beyond the bend he cannot see the bay."

\* \* \* \* \*

"No," I replied, "yet even if the guard  
 Be all asleep, it cannot but be hard  
 For us to pick the lock of that steel grille  
 Without their waking. We cannot be still  
 Crouched in the puddle, scraping at the lock.  
 The guards will wake and kill us at a knock."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Hush!" said Duhamel. "Let me whisper close.  
 I did not dare before for fear of those  
 (The rowers and the spies). I have a key  
 That will unlock the grating silently,  
 Making no noise at all in catch or ward.  
 Now creep along and spy upon the guard."

\* \* \* \* \*

"A key?" said I. My first suspicions died.  
 "Yes," said the man, "I slipped it from his side  
 While he was checking us this afternoon.  
 Courage, my son, she'll be in safety soon."  
 He showed a key, and urged me to be gone  
 Down the gaunt gashway carved in the stone,  
 A darkness in the else half-glimmering lime,  
 Where drops, each minute splashing, told the times.  
 There, in the darkness somewhere, lay the gate  
 Where courage and the moment might make Fate.

\* \* \* \* \*

I rose, half-doubting, upon hands and knees;  
 The blood within my temples sang like bees;  
 I heard my heart. I saw Duhamel's face.  
 Dark eyes in focus in a whitish space  
 Watching me close. I doubted, even then.  
 Then, with the impulse which transfigures men.  
 Doubt, hesitation, terror passed. I crawled  
 Into the dripping tunnel limestone-walled.

\* \* \* \* \*

A cold drop splattered on my neck; the wet  
 Struck chilly where my hands and knees were set,  
 I crawled into a darkness like a vault,  
 Glimmering and sweating like a rock of salt.

\* \* \* \* \*

I crept most thief-like till the passage turned.  
 There, in a barrèd greyness, I discerned  
 The world without shut from me by the grille.  
 I stopped most thief-like, listening.

\* \* \* \* \*

All was still;

The quarry I had left was still as stone.  
 The melancholy water-drip alone  
 Broke silence near me, and ahead the night  
 Was silent in the beauty of its light,  
 Across which fell the black of prison bars.

\* \* \* \* \*

I crawled ten paces more, and saw the stars  
 Above the guard-hut in the quarry pit:  
 The hut was still, it had no lantern lit.  
 I crawled again with every nerve intent.

\* \* \* \* \*

The cleanly sea-wind bringing pleasant scent  
 Blew through the grille with little specks of sand.  
 Each second I expected the word "Stand!"  
 That, or a shot; but still no challenge came.  
 The twilight of the moon's unearthly flame  
 Burned steadily; the palm-leaves on the hut  
 Rustled in gusts, the crazy door was shut.  
 The guards were either sleeping or not there.

\* \* \* \* \*

I peered out through the grille, and drank the air  
 For any scent that might betray a guard  
 Hidden in ambush near me keeping ward;  
 But no scent, save the cleanness of the sea,  
 Blew on the night wind blowing in on me.  
 There was no trace of man.

\* \* \* \* \*

I watched and listened;  
 The water dropped, the trickling passage glistened;  
 The coldness of the iron pressed my brow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then, as I listened (I can hear it now),  
 A strangled cry such as a dreamer cries  
 When the dream binds him that he cannot rise,  
 Gurgled behind me in the sleepers' cave.  
 A failing hand that struggled with the grave  
 Beat on the floor, then fluttered, then relaxed,  
 Limp as an altar or a priest has axed.  
 No need to say that someone had been killed.  
 That was no dream.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yet all the cave was stilled.  
 Nobody spoke, or called, or ran to aid.  
 The fingers of the palm-leaves ticked and played  
 On the hut-roof, but yet no guard appeared.

\* \* \* \* \*

I started to crawl back, because I feared.  
 I knew that someone must have heard that calling  
 Of the killed blood upon the midnight falling.  
 "I shall be judged the killer," so I thought.

\* \* \* \* \*

So crawling swiftly back like one distraught,  
 I groped that tunnel where the blackness made  
 Me feel each inch before my hand was laid.  
 There was no gleam, save wetness on the wall,  
 No noise but heart-beat or the dropping's fall.  
 Blackness and silence tense with murder done,  
 Tense with a soul that had not yet begun  
 To know the world without the help of clay.  
 I was in terror in that inky way.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then suddenly, while stretching out my hand,  
The terror brought my heart's blood to a stand.  
I touched a man.

\* \* \* \* \*

His face was turned to me.

He whispered: "To the grille! I have the key."  
So, without speech, I turned; he followed after.  
I trembled at the droppings from the rafter.  
Each noise without seemed footsteps in pursuit.  
The palm-leaves fluttered like a running foot.  
The moonlight held her lantern to betray us;  
A stricken stone was as a sword to slay us.  
Then at the grille we paused, that I could see  
That it was not Duhamel there with me,  
But English Gerard.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Do not speak," he said;  
"Don't think about Duhamel; he is dead.  
This key, that should unlock, is sticking: try."  
With shaking hands I took the clicket, I.  
A lean cogged bolt of iron jangled bright  
By shaking in the key-ring, day and night:  
It stuck in the knobbed latch and would not lift.

\* \* \* \* \*

All kinds of terror urged me to be swift—  
Fear of the guards, and of the darkness dying,  
And of Duhamel's body mutely crying  
The thin red cry of murdered blood and bone,  
Piping in darkness to make murder known.  
But there the clicket jammed the iron socket,  
Nor could my hand withdraw it or unlock it.  
"Let me," said Gerard; then with guile and skill  
He coaxed the knobbed iron from the grille.  
"It does not fit," he muttered, "after all."

\* \* \* \* \*

Outside, within his roost, a cock did call  
His warning to the ghosts, and slept again;  
The stars that glittered in the sky like grain  
Seemed paler; and the ticking time sped on  
To the guard's waking and the darkness gone  
With nothing done.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then Gerard turned to me.  
 "Though this is wrong, Duhamel had the key,  
 And has it still about him, as I guess,  
 Tied to his flesh or hidden in his dress.  
 Wait here, while I go rummage through his clothes  
 \* \* \* \* \*

A sleeper, tossing, jabbered broken oaths,  
 Then slept, while Gerard crawled.

I was alone,  
 Afraid no more but anxious to the bone.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

And looking out, I saw a sentry come  
 Slowly towards the grille. I cowered numb  
 Back into blackness, pressed against the wall.  
 I heard the measure of his footsteps fall  
 Along the quarry to me. I could see  
 The tenseness of his eyes turned full on me:  
 I felt that he must see me and give speech.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

His hand, that shook the grille, was in my reach.  
 He peered within to see if all were well.  
 Wept as though spat, a drop of water fell.  
 He peered into the blackness where I stood;  
 Then, having tried the lock, he tossed his hood,  
 Crouched at the grille and struck a light, and lit  
 Tinder, and blew the glowing end of it  
 Till all his face was fierce in the strong glow;  
 He sucked the rank tobacco lighted so,  
 And stood a moment blowing bitter smoke.  
 I hardly dared to breathe lest I should choke.  
 I longed to move, but dared not. Had I stirred  
 Even a finger's breadth, he must have heard.  
 He must have touched me had he thrust his hand  
 Within the grille to touch the wall he scanned.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

Then, slowly, muttering to himself, he took  
 Three steps away, then turned for one more look  
 Straight at the grille and me. I counted ten.  
 Something within the passage moved him then,  
 Because he leaned and peered as though unsure.  
 Then, stepping to the grille-work's embrasure,

He thrust his face against the iron grid,  
And stared into the blackness where I hid,  
And softly breathed, "Duhamel."

\* \* \* \*

As he spoke

A passing cloud put dimness as of smoke  
Over the moon's face. No one answered him,  
A drip-drop spat its wetness in the dim.  
He paused to call again, then turned away.  
He wandered slowly up the quarry way,  
But at the bend he stopped to rest his bones;

\* \* \* \*

He sat upon the bank and juggled stones  
For long, long minutes. Gerard joined me there;  
We watched the sentry tossing stones in air  
To catch them on his hand's back as they fell.  
We wished him in the bottom pit of hell.  
At last he rose and sauntered round the bend.  
The falling of his footsteps had an end  
At last, and Gerard spoke: "I have the key."

\* \* \* \*

The cogs caught in the locket clickily,  
The catch fell back, the heavy iron gave.  
We pushed the grille and stept out of the grave  
Into the moonlight where the wind was blowing.  
"Hurry!" I whispered, for the cocks were crowing  
In unseen roosts, the morning being near.  
We climbed the bank.

"This way," said Gerard, "here.

Now, down the slope—we dodge the sentry so.  
Now through the water where the withies grow.  
Now we are out of sight; now we can talk."  
We changed our crouching running to a walk.

\* , \* \* \* \*

He led me up a slope where rats carousing  
Squealed or showed teeth among the tumbled housing,  
Half-ruined wooden huts, or lime-washed clay.  
We turned from this into a trodden way  
Pale in the moonlight, where the dogs that prowled  
Snarled as we passed, then eyed the moon and howled.

\* \* \* \*

Below us, to our right, the harbour gleamed;  
 In front, pale with the moon, the city dreamed,  
 Roof upon roof, with pointing fingers white,  
 The minaret frost-fretted with the light,  
 With many a bubbled dome-top like a shell  
 Covering the hillside to the citadel.

\* \* \* \* \*

"There, to the left," said Gerard, "where the trees are  
 That whiteness is the palace of the Cæsar,  
 His gardens and his fishpools. That long building  
 Flanked by the domes that gitter so with gilding  
 Is where the women are. She will be there.  
 But courage, comrade! never yield to care;  
 We'll set her free, before the morning breaks.  
 But oh! my son, no more of your mistakes.  
 What made you trust Duhamel as you did?  
 Well, he is dead. The world is better rid  
 Of men like him. He tempted and betrayed  
 Those two poor souls last year.

Ah, when he bade

You go to watch the guard, I studied him.  
 He was a bitter viper, supple-slim.  
 When he had judged that you had reached the entry,  
 He stole towards the grate and called the sentry,  
 "Hussein, Hussein!"—but Hussein never heard.  
 He called him twice, but never called the third:  
 I stopped his calling, luckily for you."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Yes, but" (I said) "what did he mean to do,  
 Calling the sentry? What could that have done?"  
 "Caught you in trying to escape, my son:  
 The thing they love to do from time to time.  
 They reckon that examples stop the crime.  
 One caught and skinned makes many fear to try.  
 They would have flayed your skin off cruelly  
 In face of all these slaves, to daunt them down.  
 Then you'd have hung a-dying in the town  
 Nailed to some post, two days, perhaps, or three,  
 With thirst and flies.

But let Duhamel be;

Bad though he was, misfortune tempts a soul  
Worse than we think, and few men can control  
Their virtue, being slave; and he had been  
A Knight of France, a courtier to the Queen.  
He must have suffered to have fallen so,  
A slave, a spy on slaves; we cannot know,  
Thank God! what power of sinking lies in us.  
God keep us all."

\* \* \* \* \*

So talking to me thus,  
He turned me leftward from the citadel  
Uphill. He said: "I know this city well;  
There is the Khalif's palace straight ahead.  
How many days I've staggered, nearly dead  
From thirst, and from the sun, and from the load,  
Up to the palace-gates along this road,  
Bearing the plunder of the cruise to store,  
After a month of tugging at the oar!  
But now, please God, I shall not come again."

\* \* \* \* \*

Our talking stopped; we turned into a lane.  
High, white-washed walls rose up on either side.  
The narrow gash between was four feet wide,  
And there at sprawl within the narrow way,  
With head in hood, a sleeping beggar lay.  
We stepped across his body heedfully;  
Deep in his dream he muttered drowsily.

\* \* \* \* \*

We tip-toed on. The wall-tops, high above,  
White in the quiet moonlight, hid my love.  
We crept like worms in darkness yard by yard,  
Still as the dead, but that our hearts beat hard.  
And, spite of self, my teeth clickt from the flood  
Of quick excitement running in my blood.  
We were so near her, and the peril came  
Close, with the moment that would prove the same.

\* \* \* \* \*

The lane turned sharply twice. In shadow dark,  
With shiverings of singing like a lark,  
A fountain sprang, relented, sprinkled, bubbled,  
In some cool garden that the moonlight troubled,



Unseen by us, although a smell of roses  
 Warm on the wind, stole to us from its closes.  
 Then came a wood-smoke smell, and mixed therewith  
 Gums from the heart's blood of the sinnamon's pith.  
 And Gerard touched me. We had reached the place.  
 The woman's palace-wall was there in face,  
 The garden-wall merged with it, moonlight-topped;  
 Just where the two together merged, we stoppeded.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then, as we stood there, breathing, we could hear.  
 Beyond the wall, some footsteps loitering near,  
 Some garden sentry slowly paced his watch  
 Crooning a love-song; I could smell his match  
 That smouldered in the linstock at his hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

His footsteps passed away upon the sand  
 Slowly, with pauses, for he stopped to eat  
 The green buds of the staric on his beat.  
 When he had gone, a cock crowed in the lane.  
 "It will be morning when he crows again,"  
 Was in our thoughts: we had full little time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some joist-holes gave us foothold, we could climb  
 Without much trouble to the wall's flat top;  
 There we lay still, to let the plaster drop,  
 And see what dangers lay below us there.

\* \* \* \* \*

The garden of the palace breathed sweet air  
 Under our perch, the fountain's leaping glitter  
 Shone; a bird started with a frightened twitter.  
 Alleys of blossomed fruit-trees girt a cool  
 White marble screen about a bathing-pool,  
 The palace rose beyond among its trees,  
 Splay-froned figs and dates and cypresses.

\* \* \* \* \*

Close to our left hands was the Woman's House.  
 We crept along our wall-top perilous  
 Till we could touch the roof that hid my love.  
 A teaken joist-end jutted out above.  
 We swung ourselves upon the roof thereby.

\* \* \* \* \*

The dewy wet, flat house-top faced the sky.  
We crouched together there.

Sweet smoke was wreathing

Out of a trap-door near us; heavy breathing  
Came from a woman sleeping near the trap.  
I crept to her, not knowing what might hap.  
She was an old Moor woman with primmed lips,  
And foul white hair, and hennaed finger-tips  
That clutched a dark hair blanket to her chin.

\* \* \* \* \*

I crept to the trap-door and peered within.  
A ladder led within. A lantern burning  
Showed us a passage leading to a turning,  
But open to the garden at one end.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even as we peered, a man came round the bend,  
Walked slowly down that lamp-lit corridor,  
And stood to watch the garden at the door.  
We saw his back within that moonlit square.  
He had a curving sword which glittered bare.  
He stood three minutes still, watching the night;  
Each beating second made the east more light.  
He cracked and relished nuts or melon-seeds.

\* \* \* \* \*

The hoof-sparks of the morning's running steeds  
Made a pale dust now in the distant east,  
But still the man stood cracking at his feast.  
Nut after nut; then flinging broken shell  
Into the rose-walk, clicking as it fell,  
He turned towards us up the passage dim.  
There at the trap we crouched right over him,  
And as he passed beneath, his fingers tried  
A door below us in the passage-side.  
Then, slowly loitering on, he reached and passed  
The passage turning; he was gone at last,  
His footsteps died away; they struck on stone  
In some far cloister; we were left alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then, while our leaping hearts beat like to drums,  
We took the gambler's way, that takes what comes:

We slid into the trap and down the stair,  
 Steep, like a loft's; eleven rungs there were.  
 We stood within the passage at the door  
 Tried by the guard that little while before.

\* \* \* \* \*

Within, there was a rustling and a chinking  
 (Like the glass dangles that the wind sets clinking),  
 And something tense there was within; the throbbing  
 Of hearts in a despair too deep for sobbing:  
 We felt it there before we pressed the latch.

\* \* \* \* \*

The teaken bar rose stiffly from its catch.  
 We slipt within and closed the door again.  
 We were within the dwelling-place of pain,  
 Among the women whom the Moors had taken,  
 The broken-hearts, despairing and forsaken,  
 The desolate that cried where no man heard.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nobody challenged, but some women stirred.  
 It was so dark at first, after the moon.  
 A smoking censer, swinging, creaked a croon;  
 There was a hanging lamp of beaten brass  
 That gave dim light through scraps of coloured glass.  
 I saw a long low room with many a heap  
 Dark, on the floor, where women lay asleep  
 On silken cushions. Round the wall there ran  
 (Dark, too, with cushioned women) a divan,  
 And women stirred and little chains were shaken.

\* \* \* \* \*

What horror 'tis, to prisoners, to waken  
 Out of the dreams of home back to the chain,  
 Back to the iron and the mill again,  
 In some far land among one's enemies!  
 I knew that then; those women made me wise.

\* \* \* \* \*

We stared into the twilight till our eyes  
 Could see more clearly; no one challenged us.  
 But standing back against the door way thus  
 I saw the warden of the room, asleep,  
 Close to me, on the cushions, breathing deep,

Her hard face made like iron by the gloom.  
An old grim Moor that warden of the room,  
A human iron fettered on the poor.  
Far down the room a fetter touched the floor.

\* \* \* \* \*

Even in the gloom I knew that she was there,  
My April of a woman with bright hair;  
She sat upright against the wall alone,  
By burning meditation turned to stone,  
Staring ahead, and when I touched her shoulder  
Her body (stiffened like a corpse and colder)  
Seemed not herself, her mind seemed far away.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was no need to talk, but to essay  
The light steel chain that linked her to the wall.  
We gripped it, heaving till its links were gall  
Biting across our hands, but still we drave,  
She, I, and Gerard, heaving till it gave.  
The leaded staple snapped across the shank.

\* \* \* \* \*

The loosed chain struck the flooring with a clank.  
We all lay still, my arm about my own.  
"Who's moving there? Be silent!" snapped the crone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Cross with the slave who had awakened her,  
She stared towards us. We could hear her stir,  
Craning towards us; but she could not see  
More than the cushions tumbled there with me.  
She thought, perhaps: "That fair one shook her chain."  
She growled: "I'll beat you if you stir, again.  
A Moorish whip upon your Christian skin."

\* \* \* \* \*

I saw her clutch her blanket to her chin,  
Turn to her side, and settle to her rest.  
The dawn, that brings the skylark from her nest,  
Was flying with bright feet that ever hasted.  
Each moment there meant happy chances wasted,  
Yet still we had to stay until she slept.

\* \* \* \* \*

When she had fallen to a doze we crept  
 Stealthily to the door on hands and knees.  
 All of those women came from over-seas.  
 We could not waken them to share our chance.  
 Not Peru's silver nor the fields of France  
 Could buy a place in our society.  
 One tender feeling might have made us die  
 All three, and been no kindness to the fourth:  
 Compassions perish when the wind is north.

\* \* \* \* \*

Close to the door a woman leaned and caught  
 My darling's hand, and kissed it swift as thought,  
 And whispered, "Oh, good luck!" and then was still.  
 She had no luck, but oh! she had goodwill.  
 We blest her in our hearts.

The warder stirred,

Growling, but dozing lightly; then we heard  
 Outside the door, within three feet of us,  
 The footsteps of the sentry perilous,  
 The clinking of his scabbard lightly touching  
 Some metal button, then his fingers clutching  
 The taken catch to try if it were home.

\* \* \* \* \*

We stood stone-still, expecting him to come.  
 He did not come, he pushed the door and passed,  
 Treading this beat exactly like the last,  
 To loiter at the door to crack and spit.

\* \* \* \* \*

The time dragged by till he had done with it.  
 Then back he came, and once again he shook  
 The catch upon its socket; then he took  
 His way along the passage out of hearing.

\* \* \* \* \*

The room 'gan glimmer from the dawning nearing,  
 The warder struggled with a dream, and cried;  
 The lamp-flame purred from want of oil, and died.  
 And she, the woman who had kissed her hand,  
 Whispered, "Oh, go, for God's sake! do not stand  
 One moment more, but go! God help you free."

\* \* \* \* \*

We crept out of the prison silently,  
Gerard the last, who closed the door behind us.  
The crowing of a cock came to remind us  
That it was morning now, with daylight breaking,  
The leaves all shivering and birds awaking.  
We climbed the ladder.

\* \* \* \* \*

Its eleven rungs |  
 Called to the Moors of us with all their tongues:  
 "Wakel" "Wakel" "They fly!" "The three of them are  
 flying!"  
 "Oh, broken housel" "Oh, sleepers, thieves are trying  
 To take the Khalif's treasure!" "Guards!" "Awakel!"  
 "They rob the women!" "For the prophet's sake,"  
 "Slaughter these Christians!" Thus the ladder spoke  
 Three times aloud, yet nobody awoke.  
 Even the hag upon the roof was still.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now the red cock of dawning triumphed shrill,  
And little ends of landwind shook the leaves;  
White through the cypress gleamed the palace eaves.  
The dim and dewy beauty of the blossom,  
Shy with the daybreak, trembled in its bosom,  
Some snowy petals loitered to the ground.  
The city houses had a wakening sound,  
Some smoke was rising, and we heard the stirs  
Made at the gates by country marketers;  
Only a moment's twilight yet remained.

\* \* \* \* \*

The supple links that held my darling chained  
Served as a rope to help her down the wall.  
Our hearts stood still to hear the plaster fall,  
But down we scrambled safely to the lane.  
We heard the hag upon the roof complain:  
She called strange names, and listened for reply.  
We heard her tread the ladder heavily.  
It was her rising-time, perhaps, we thought.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now the dangers that the daylight brought  
Came thick upon us; for our foreign dress  
Betrayed us at each step beyond a guess.

Even to be seen was certain death to us.  
 We hid my darling's face, and hasting thus  
 Kept up the narrow lane as Gerard bade.  
 He said: "Beyond, the city wall is laid  
 Heaped in the ditch, and we can cross it there.  
 It fell from rottenness and disrepair.  
 They set no guard there—or they did not set.  
 They will not notice us, and we can get  
 Out to the tombs and hide inside a vault."

\* \* \* \* \*

In overbrimming beauty without fault  
 The sun brought colour to that dingy hive.  
 It made the black tree green, the sea alive,  
 The huts like palaces; but us who fled  
 Like ghosts at cockcrow hasting to the dead.

\* \* \* \* \*

The lane had ceased. We reached an open space,  
 The greenish slope, the horses' baiting-place,  
 Between the city and the palace wall.  
 The hill dipped sharply in a steepish fall  
 Down to the houses, and the grass was worn  
 With hoofs, and littered with the husks of corn.  
 "Now, slowly," Gerard said, "for Moors go slowly."

\* \* \* \* \*

There, trembling in its blueness dim and holy,  
 Lay the great water bursting on the Mole.  
 Her tremblings came as thoughts come in a soul.  
 There was our peace, there was the road to home,  
 That never-trodden trembling bright with foam.  
 "There lies the road," said Gerard; "now, come on."

\* \* \* \* \*

The high leaves in the trees above us shone,  
 For now the sun had climbed the eastern hill;  
 The coldness of the dawn was with us still.  
 We walked along the grass towards an alley  
 Between high walls beyond a tiny valley.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fronting this alley's mouth our sloping grass  
 Dipped down and up, a little gut there was  
 Down which we slithered and from which we climbed.

\* \* \* \* \*

And just as we emerged, exactly timed,  
Just as we drew my darling to the top,  
There came a noise that made our pulses stop.

\* \* \* \* \*

For, down towards us, blocking all the road,  
Their horses striking sparks out as they strode,  
Came lancers clattering with their hands held high,  
Their knees bent up, and many a sharp, quick cry;  
The pennons in their lance-heads flapped like flame.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three ranks in twos, and then a swordsman came,  
Then one who held a scarlet banner; then  
One in a scarlet cloak, a King of men.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was the Khalif's self, returning home.  
His rein had smeared his stallion's crest with foam,  
I noticed that. He was not twenty yards  
From us. He saw us.

\* \* \* \* \*

At a sign his guards  
Rode round us, bade us stand; there was no hope.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Our luck!" said Gerard. Then they took a rope  
And hitched our wrists together. Then they led  
The three of us, downhearted like the dead,  
Before the Khalif's self. The swordsman bared  
His right arm to the shoulder and prepared.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Khalif stared at us, and we at him;  
We were defiant at him, he was grim.  
A hawk-like fellow, like a bird of prey,  
A hawk to strike, a swift to get away.  
His clean brown face (with blood beneath the brown)  
Puckered, his thin lips tightened in a frown,  
He knew without our telling what we were.

\* \* \* \* \*

The swordsman looked for word to kill us there.

\* \* \* \* \*



I saw the lancers' glances at their chief.  
 Death on the instant would have seemed relief  
 To that not knowing what her fate would be  
 After the sword had made an end of me.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Khalif's face grew grimmer; then he said:  
 "Bring them with us." The swordsman sheathed his blade.

\* \* \* \* \*

They took us to a palace, to a chamber  
 Smelling of bruised spice and burning amber.  
 There slaves were sent to fetch the newly risen  
 Servants and warders of the woman's prison.  
 The white of death was on them when they came.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Khalif lightened on them with quick flame.  
 Harsh though she was, I sorrowed for the crone,  
 For she was old, a woman, and alone,  
 And came, in age, upon disgrace through me;  
 I know not what disgrace, I did not see  
 Those crones again, I doubt not they were whipped  
 For letting us escape them while they slept.  
 Perhaps they killed the sentry. Who can tell?  
 The devil ever keeps the laws in hell.

\* \* \* \* \*

They dragged them out to justice one by one.  
 However bitter was the justice done,  
 I doubt not they were thankful to be quit  
 (At cost of some few pangs) the fear of it.  
 Then our turn came.

The Khalif's fury raged  
 Because our eyes had seen those women caged,  
 Because our Christian presence had defiled  
 The Woman's House, and somehow had beguiled  
 A woman-slave, his victim, out of it,  
 Against all Moorish law and Holy Writ.  
 If we had killed his son it had been less.

\* \* \* \* \*

He rose up in his place and rent his dress.  
 "Let them be ganch'd upon the hooks," he cried,  
 "Throughout to-day, but not till they have died.  
 Then gather all the slaves, and flay these three  
 Alive, before them, that the slaves may see  
 What comes to dogs who try to get away.  
 So, ganch the three."

Then Gerard answered: "Stay.  
 Before you fling us to the hooks, hear this.  
 There are two laws, and men may go amiss  
 Either by breaking or by keeping one.  
 There is man's law by which man's work is done.  
 Your galleys rowed, your palace kept in state,  
 Your victims ganch'd or headed on the gate,  
 And accident has bent us to its yoke.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We break it: death; but it is better broke.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You know, you Khalif, by what death you reign,  
 What force of fraud, what cruelty of pain,  
 What spies and prostitutes support your power,  
 And help your law to run its little hour:  
 We, who are but ourselves, defy it all.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We were free people till you made us thrall.  
 I was a sailor whom you took at sea  
 While sailing home. This woman that you see  
 You broke upon with murder in the night,  
 To drag her here to die for your delight.  
 This young man is her lover.

When he knew

That she was taken by your pirate crew,  
 He followed her to save her, or at least  
 Be near her in her grief. Man is a beast,  
 And women are his pasture by your law.  
 This young man was in safety, and he saw  
 His darling taken to the slave-girls' pen  
 Of weeping in the night and beasts of men.  
 He gave up everything, risked everything,  
 Came to your galley, took the iron ring,

Rowed at the bitter oar-loom as a slave,  
 Only for love of her, for hope to save  
 Her from one bruise of all the many bruises  
 That fall upon a woman when she loses  
 Those whom your gang of bloodhounds made her lose.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Knowing another law, we could not choose  
 But stamp your law beneath our feet as dust,  
 Its bloodshed and its rapine and its lust,  
 For one clean hour of struggle to be free;  
 She for her passionate pride of chastity,  
 He for his love of her, and I because  
 I'm not too old to glory in the cause  
 Of generous souls who have harsh measure meted.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We did the generous thing and are defeated.  
 Boast, then, to-night, when you have drunken deep,  
 Between the singing woman's song and sleep,  
 That you have tortured to the death three slaves  
 Who spat upon your law and found their graves  
 Helping each other in the generous thing.  
 No mighty triumph for a boast, O King."

\* \* \* \* \*

Then he was silent while the Khalif stared.  
 Never before had any being dared  
 To speak thus to him. All the courtiers paled.  
 We, who had died, expected to be haled  
 To torture there and then before the crowd.  
 It was so silent that the wind seemed loud  
 Clicking a loose slat in the open shutter.  
 I heard the distant breakers at their mutter  
 Upon the Mole, I saw my darling's face  
 Steady and proud; a breathing filled the place,  
 Men drawing breath until the Khalif spoke.

\* \* \* \* \*

His torn dress hung upon him like a cloak.  
 He spoke at last. "You speak of law," he said  
 "By climates and by soils the laws are made.  
 Ours is a hawk-law suited to the land,  
 This rock of hawks or eyrie among sand;  
 I am a hawk, the hawk-law pleases me.

\* \* \* \* \*

"But I am man, and, being man, can be  
Moved, sometimes, Christian, by the law which makes  
Men who are suffering from man's mistakes  
Brothers sometimes.

I had not heard this tale  
Of you, the lover, following to jail  
The woman whom you loved. You bowed your neck  
Into the iron fettered to the deck,  
And followed her to prison, all for love?

\* \* \* \* \*

"Allah, who gives men courage from above,  
Has surely blessed you, boy.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And you, his queen;  
Without your love his courage had not been.  
Your beauty and your truth prevailed on him.  
Allah has blessed you, too.

\* \* \* \* \*

"And you, the grim  
Killer of men at midnight, you who speak  
To Kings as peers with colour in your cheek,  
Allah made you a man who helps his friends.

\* \* \* \* \*

"God made you all. I will not thwart his ends.  
You shall be free.

Hear all. These folks are free.  
You, Emir, fit a xebec for the sea  
To let them sail at noon.

Go where you will.  
And lest my rovers should molest you still,  
Here is my seal that they shall let you pass."

\* \* \* \* \*

Throughout the room a sudden murmur was,  
A gasp of indrawn breath and shifting feet.  
So life was given back, the thing so sweet,  
The undrunk cup that we were longing for.

\* \* \* \* \*

My darling spoke: "O Khalif, one gift more.  
After this bounty that our hearts shall praise  
At all our praying-times by nights and days,  
I ask yet more, O raiser from the dead.  
There in your woman's prison as we fled

A hopeless woman blessed us. It is said  
 That blessings from the broken truly bless.  
 Khalif, we would not leave in hopelessness  
 One whose great heart could bless us even then  
 Even as we left her in the prison pen.  
 She wished us fortune from a broken heart:  
 Let her come with us, Khalif, when we start."  
 "Go, you," the Khalif said, "and choose her forth."

\* \* \* \* \*

At noon the wind was blowing to the north;  
 A swift felucca with a scarlet sail  
 Was ready for us, deep with many a bale  
 Of gold and spice and silk, the great King's gifts,  
 The banners of the King were on her lifts.  
 The King and all his court rode down to see  
 Us four glad souls put seawards from Saffee.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the last glowing of the sunset's gold  
 We looked our last upon that pirate hold;  
 The palace gilding shone awhile like fire,  
 We were at sea with all our heart's desire,  
 Beauty and friendship and the dream fulfilled:  
 The golden answer to the deeply willed,  
 The purely longed-for, hardly tried-for thing.  
 Into the dark our sea-boat dipped her wing;  
 Polaris climbed out of the dark and shone,  
 Then came the moon, and now Saffee was gone,  
 With all hell's darkness hidden by the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, beautiful is love, and to be free  
 Is beautiful, and beautiful are friends.  
 Love, freedom, comrades, surely make amends  
 For all these thorns through which we walk to death!  
 God let us breathe your beauty with our breath.

\* \* \* \* \*

All early in the Maytime, when daylight comes at four,  
 We blessed the hawthorn blossom that welcomed us ashore.  
 Oh, beautiful in this living that passes like the foam,  
 It is to go with sorrow, yet come with beauty home!

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE HOUNDS OF HELL

ABOUT the crowing of the cock,  
When the shepherds feel the cold,  
A horse's hoofs went clip-a-clock  
Along the hangman's wold.

The horse-hoofs trotted on the stone,  
The hoof-sparks glittered by,  
And then a hunting horn was blown  
And hounds broke into cry.

There was a strangeness in the horn,  
A wildness in the cry,  
A power of devilry forlorn  
Exulting bloodily.

A power of night that ran a prey  
Along the hangman's hill.  
The shepherds heard the spent buck bray  
And the horn blow for the kill.

They heard the worrying of the hounds  
About the dead beast's bones;  
Then came the horn, and then the sounds  
Of horse-hoofs treading stones.

"What hounds are these that hunt the night?"  
The shepherds asked in fear,  
"Look, there are calkins clinking bright;  
They must be coming here."

The calkins clinkered to a spark,  
The hunter called the pack;  
The sheep-dogs' fells all bristled stark  
And all their lips went back.

"Lord God!" the shepherds said, "they come;  
And see what hounds he has:  
All dripping bluish fire, and dumb.  
And nosing to the grass,

"And trotting scatheless through the gorse,  
And bristling in the fell.  
Lord, it is Death upon the horse,  
And they're the hounds of hell!"

They shook to watch them as they sped,  
All black against the sky;  
A horseman with a hooded head  
And great hounds padding by.

When daylight drove away the dark  
And larks went up and thrilled,  
The shepherds climbed the wold to mark  
What beast the hounds had killed.

They came to where the hounds had fed,  
And in that trampled place  
They found a pedlar lying dead,  
With horror in his face.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a farmer on the wold  
Where all the brooks begin,  
He had a thousand sheep from fold  
Out grazing on the whin.

The next night, as he lay in bed,  
He heard a canterer come  
Trampling the wold-top with a tread  
That sounded like a drum.

He thought it was a post that rode,  
So turned him to his sleep;  
But the canterer in his dreams abode  
Like horse-hoofs running sheep.

And in his dreams a horn was blown  
And feathering hounds replied,  
And all his wethers stood like stone  
In rank on the hillside.

Then, while he struggled still with dreams,  
He saw his wethers run  
Before a pack cheered on with screams,  
The thousand sheep as one.

So, leaping from his bed in fear,  
He flung the window back,  
And he heard a death-horn blowing clear  
And the crying of a pack,

And the thundering of a thousand sheep,  
All mad and running wild  
To the stone-pit seven fathoms deep,  
Whence all the town is tiled.

After them came the hounds of hell,  
With hell's own fury filled;  
Into the pit the wethers fell,  
And all but three were killed.

The hunter blew his horn a note  
And laughed against the moon;  
The farmer's breath caught in his throat,  
He fell into a swoon.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next night when the watch was set  
A heavy rain came down,  
The leaden gutters dripped with wet  
Into the shuttered town.

So close the shutters were, the chink  
Of lamplight scarcely showed;  
The men at fireside heard no clink  
Of horse-hoofs on the road.

They heard the creaking hinge complain,  
And the mouse that gnawed the floor,  
And the limping footsteps of the rain  
On the stone outside the door.

And on the wold the rain came down  
Till trickles streakt the grass:  
A traveller riding to the town  
Drew rein to let it pass.

The wind sighed in the fir-tree tops,  
The trickles sobbed in the grass,  
The branches ran with showers of drops:  
No other noise there was.



Till up the wold the traveller heard  
A horn blow faint and thin;  
He thought it was the curlew bird  
Lamenting to the whin;

And when the far horn blew again,  
He thought an owl hallooed,  
Or a rabbit gave a shriek of pain  
As the stoat leapt in the wood.

But when the horn blew next, it blew  
A trump that split the air,  
And hounds gave cry to an Halloo!—  
The hunt of hell was there.

“Black” (said the traveller), “black and swift,  
Those running devils came;  
Scoring to cry with hackles stiff,  
And grin-jowls dropping flame.”

They settled to the sightless scent,  
And up the hill a cry  
Told where the frightened quarry went,  
Well knowing it would die.

Then presently a cry rang out,  
And a mort blew for the kill;  
A shepherd with his throat torn out  
Lay dead upon the hill.

\* \* \* \* \*

When this was known, the shepherds drove  
Their flocks into the town;  
No man, for money or for love,  
Would watch them on the down.

But night by night the terror ran,  
The townsmen heard them still;  
Nightly the hell-hounds hunted man  
And the hunter whooped the kill.

The men who lived upon the moor  
Would waken to the scratch  
Of hounds' claws digging at the door  
Or scraping at the latch.

And presently no man would go  
Without doors after dark,  
Lest hell's black hunting horn should blow,  
And hell's black bloodhounds mark.

They shivered round the fire at home,  
While out upon the bent  
The hounds with black jowls dropping foam  
Went nosing to the scent.

Men let the hay crop run to seed  
And the corn crop sprout in ear,  
And the root crop choke itself in weed—  
That hell-hound hunting year.

Empty to heaven lay the wold,  
Village and church grew green;  
The courtyard flagstones spread with mould,  
And weeds sprang up between.

And sometimes when the cock had crowed,  
And the hillside stood out grey,  
Men saw them slinking up the road  
All sullen from their prey.

A hooded horseman on a black,  
With nine black hounds at heel,  
After the hell-hunt going back  
All bloody from their meal.

And in men's minds a fear began  
That hell had over-hurled  
The guardians of the soul of man,  
And come to rule the world

With bitterness of heart by day,  
And terror in the night,  
And the blindness of a barren way  
And withering of delight.

\* \* \* \*

St. Withiel lived upon the moor,  
Where the peat-men live in holes;  
He worked among the peat-men poor.  
Who only have their souls.

## THE HOUNDS OF HELL

He brought them nothing but his love  
And the will to do them good,  
But power filled him from above,  
His very touch was food.

Men told St. Withiel of the hounds,  
And how they killed their prey.  
He thought them far beyond his bounds,  
So many miles away.

Then one whose son the hounds had killed  
Told him the tale at length;  
St. Withiel pondered why God willed  
That hell should have such strength.

Then one, a passing traveller, told  
How, since the hounds had come,  
The church was empty on the wold  
And all the priests were dumb.

St. Withiel rose at this, and said:  
"This priest will not be dumb;  
My spirit will not be afraid  
Though all hell's devils come."

He took his stick and out he went,  
The long way to the wold,  
Where the sheep-bells clink upon the bent  
And every wind is cold.

He passed the rivers running red  
And the mountains standing bare;  
At last the wold-land lay ahead,  
Un-yellowed by the share.

All in the brown October time  
He clambered to the vale;  
The plum lay purpled into slime,  
The harvest lay in field.

Trampled by many-footed rain  
The sunburnt corn lay dead;  
The myriad finches in the grain  
Rose bothering at his tread.

The myriad finches took a sheer  
And settled back to food:  
A man was not a thing to fear  
In such a solitude.

The hurrying of their wings died out,  
A silence took the hill;  
There was no dog, no bell, no shout,  
The windmill's sails were still.

The gate swung creaking on its hasp,  
The pear splashed from the tree,  
In the rotting apple's heart the wasp  
Was drunken drowsily.

The grass upon the cart-wheel ruts  
Had made the trackways dim;  
The rabbits ate and hopped their scuts,  
They had no fear of him.

The sunset reddened in the west;  
The distant depth of blue  
Stretched out and dimmed; to twiggy nest  
The rooks in clamour drew.

The oakwood in his mail of brass  
Bowed his great crest and stood;  
The pine-tree saw St. Withiel pass,  
His great bole blushed like blood.

Then tree and wood alike were dim,  
Yet still St. Withiel strode;  
The only noise to comfort him  
Were his footsteps on the road.

The crimson in the west was smoked,  
The west wind heaped the wrack,  
Each tree seemed like a murderer cloaked  
To stab him in the back.

Darkness and desolation came  
To dog his footsteps there;  
The dead leaves rustling called his name,  
The death-moth brushed his hair.

The murmurings of the wind fell still;  
He stood and stared around:  
He was alone upon the hill,  
On devil-haunted ground.

What was the whitish thing which stood  
In front, with one arm raised,  
Like death a-grinning in a hood?  
The saint stood still and gazed.

“What are you?” said St. Withiel. “Speak!”  
Not any answer came  
But the night-wind making darkness bleak,  
And the leaves that called his name.

A glow shone on the whitish thing,  
It neither stirred nor spoke:  
In spite of faith, a shuddering  
Made the good saint to choke.

He struck the whiteness with his staff—  
It was a withered tree;  
An owl flew from it with a laugh,  
The darkness shook with glee.

The darkness came all round him close  
And cackled in his ear;  
The midnight, full of life none knows,  
Was very full of fear.

The darkness cackled in his heart  
That things of hell were there,  
That the startled rabbit played a part  
And the stoat’s leap did prepare—

Prepare the stage of night for blood,  
And the mind of night for death,  
For a spirit trembling in the mud  
In an agony for breath.

A terror came upon the saint,  
It stripped his spirit bare;  
He was sick body standing faint,  
Cold sweat and stiffened hair.

He took his terror by the throat  
And stamped it underfoot;  
Then, far away, the death-horn's note  
Quailed like a screech-owl's hoot.

Still far away that devil's horn  
Its quavering death-note blew,  
But the saint could hear the crackling thorn  
That the hounds trod as they drew.

"Lord, it is true," St. Withiel moaned,  
"And the hunt is drawing near!  
Devils that Paradise disowned,  
They know that I am here.

"And there, O God, a hound gives tongue,  
And great hounds quarter dim"—  
The saint's hands to his body clung,  
He knew they came for him.

Then close at hand the horn was loud,  
Like Peter's cock of old  
For joy that Peter's soul was cowed,  
And Jesus' body sold.

Then terribly the hounds in cry  
Gave answer to the horn;  
The saint in terror turned to fly  
Before his flesh was torn.

After his body came the hounds,  
After the hounds the horse;  
Their running crackled with the sounds  
Of fire that runs in gorse.

The saint's breath failed, but still they came;  
The hunter cheered them on,  
Even as a wind that blows a flame  
In the vigil of St. John.

And as St. Withiel's terror grew,  
The crying of the pack  
Bayed nearer, as though terror drew  
Those grip teeth to his back.

No hope was in his soul, no stay,  
Nothing but screaming will  
To save his terror-stricken clay  
Before the hounds could kill.

The laid corn tripped, the bramble caught,  
He stumbled on the stones—  
The thorn that scratched him, to his thought,  
Was hell's teeth at his bones.

His legs seemed bound as in a dream,  
The wet earth held his feet,  
He screamed aloud as rabbits scream  
Before the stoat's teeth meet.

A black thing struck him on the brow,  
A blackness loomed and waved;  
It was a tree—he caught a bough  
And scrambled up it, saved.

Saved for the moment, as he thought,  
He pressed against the bark:  
The hell-hounds missed the thing they sought,  
They quartered in the dark.

They panted underneath the tree,  
They quartered to the call;  
The hunter cried: "Yoi doit, go seel!"  
His death-horn blew a fall.

Now up, now down, the hell-hounds went  
With soft feet padding wide;  
They tried, but could not hit the scent,  
However hard they tried.

Then presently the horn was blown,  
The hounds were called away;  
The hoof-beats glittered on the stone  
And trotted on the brae.

\* \* \* \* \*

The saint gat strength, but with it came  
A horror of his fear,  
Anguish at having failed, and shame,  
And sense of judgment near:

Anguish at having left his charge  
And having failed his trust,  
At having flung his sword and targe  
To save his body's dust.

He clambered down the saving tree.  
"I am unclean!" he cried.  
"Christ died upon a tree for me,  
I used a tree to hide.

"The hell-hounds bayed about the cross,  
And tore his clothes apart;  
But Christ was gold, and I am dross,  
And mud is in my heart."

He stood in anguish in the field;  
A little wind blew by,  
The dead leaves dropped, the great stars wheeled  
Their squadrons in the sky.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Lord, I will try again," he said,  
"Though all hell's devils tear.  
This time I will not be afraid,  
And what is sent I'll dare."

He set his face against the slope  
Until he topped the brae;  
Courage had healed his fear, and hope  
Had put his shame away.

And then, far-off, a quest-note ran,  
A feathering hound replied:  
The hounds still drew the night for man  
Along that countryside.

Then one by one the hell-hounds spoke,  
And still the horn made cheer;  
Then the full devil-chorus woke  
To fill the saint with fear.

He knew that they were after him  
To hunt him till he fell;  
He turned and fled into the dim,  
And after him came hell.



Over the stony wold he went,  
Through thorns and over quags;  
The bloodhounds cried upon the scent,  
They ran like rutting stags.

And when the saint looked round, he saw  
Red eyes intently strained,  
The bright teeth in the grinning jaw,  
And running shapes that gained.

Uphill, downhill, with failing breath,  
He ran to save his skin,  
Like one who knocked the door of death,  
Yet dared not enter in.

Then water gurgled in the night,  
Dark water lay in front,  
The saint saw bubbles running bright;  
The huntsman cheered his hunt.

The saint leaped far into the stream  
And struggled to the shore.  
The hunt died like an evil dream,  
A strange land lay before.

He waded to a glittering land,  
With brighter light than ours;  
The water ran on silver sand  
By yellow water-flowers.

The fishes nosed the stream to rings  
As petals floated by,  
The apples were like orbs of kings  
Against a glow of sky.

On cool and steady stalks of green  
The outland flowers grew.  
The ghost-flower, silver like a queen,  
The queen-flower streaked with blue

The king-flower, crimson on his stalk,  
With frettings in his crown;  
The peace-flower, purple, from the chalk,  
The flower that loves the down.

Lilies like thoughts, roses like words,  
In the sweet brain of June;  
The bees there, like the stock-dove birds,  
Breathed all the air with croon.

Purple and golden hung the plums;  
Like slaves bowed down with gems  
The peach-trees were; sweet-scented gums  
Oozed clammy from their stems.

And birds of every land were there,  
Like flowers that sang and flew;  
All beauty that makes singing fair  
That sunny garden knew.

For all together sang with throats  
So tuned, that the intense  
Colour and odour pearled the notes  
And passed into the sense.

And as the saint drew near, he heard  
The birds talk, each to each,  
The fire-bird to the glory-bird.  
He understood their speech.

One said: "The saint was terrified  
Because the hunters came."  
Another said: "The bloodhounds cried,  
And all their eyes were flame."

Another said: "No shame to him,  
For mortal men are blind:  
They cannot see beyond the grim  
Into the peace behind."

Another sang: "They cannot know,  
Unless we give the clue,  
The power that waits in them below  
The things they are and do."

Another sang: "They never guess  
That deep within them stand  
Courage and peace and loveliness,  
Wisdom and skill of hand."

## THE HOUNDS OF HELL

Another sang: "Sing, brothers! come  
Make beauty in the air!  
The saint is shamed with martyrdom  
Beyond his strength to bear.

"Sing, brothers! every bird that flies!"  
They stretched their throats to sing,  
With the sweetness known in Paradise  
When the bells of heaven ring.

"Open the doors, good saint!" they cried.  
"Pass deeper to your soul;  
There is a spirit in your side  
That hell cannot control.

"Open the doors to let him in,  
That beauty with the sword;  
The hounds are silly shapes of sin,  
They shrivel at a word.

"Come, saint!" and as they sang, the air  
Shone with the shapes of flame,  
Bird after bright bird glittered there,  
Crying aloud they came.

A rush of brightness and delight,  
White as the snow in drift,  
The fire-bird and the glory-bright,  
Most beautiful, most swift.

Sweeping aloft to show the way  
And singing as they flew,  
Many and glittering as the spray  
When windy seas are blue.

So cheerily they rushed, so strong  
Their sweep was through the flowers,  
The saint was swept into their song  
And gloried in their powers.

He sang, and leaped into the stream,  
And struggled to the shore;  
The garden faded like a dream.  
A darkness lay before.

Darkness with glimmery light forlorn  
And quavering hounds in quest,  
A huntsman blowing on a horn,  
And lost things not at rest.

He saw the huntsman's hood show black  
Against the greying east;  
He heard him hollo to the pack  
And horn them to the feast.

He heard the bloodhounds come to cry  
And settle to the scent;  
The black horse made the hoof-casts fly.  
The sparks flashed up the bent.

The saint stood still until they came  
Baying to ring him round:  
A horse whose flecking foam was flame,  
And hound on yelling hound.

And jaws that dripped with bitter fire  
Snarled at the saint to tear.  
Pilled hell-hounds, balder than the geier,  
Leaped round him everywhere.

St. Withiel let the hell-hounds rave.  
He cried: "Now, in this place,  
Climb down, you huntsman of the grave,  
And let me see your face.

"Climb down, you huntsman out of hell  
And show me what you are.  
The judge has stricken on the bell,  
Now answer at the bar."

The baying of the hounds fell still,  
Their jaws' salt fire died.  
The wind of morning struck in chill  
Along that countryside.

The blackness of the horse was shrunk,  
His sides seemed ribbed and old.  
The rider, hooded like a monk,  
Was trembling with the cold.

The rider bowed as though with pain;  
Then clambered down and stood,  
The thin thing that the frightened brain  
Had fed with living blood.

"Show me. What are you?" said the saint.  
A hollow murmur spoke.  
"This, Lord," it said; a hand moved faint  
And drew aside the cloak.

A Woman Death that palsy shook  
Stood sick and dwindling there;  
Her fingers were a bony crook,  
And blood was on her hair.

"Stretch out your hands and sign the Cross,"  
Was all St. Withiel said.  
The bloodhounds moaned upon the moss,  
The Woman Death obeyed.

Whimpering with pain, she made the sign.  
"Go, devil-hag," said he,  
"Beyond all help of bread and wine,  
Beyond all land and sea,

"Into the ice, into the snow,  
Where Death himself is stark!  
Out, with your hounds about you, go,  
And perish in the dark!"

They dwindled as the mist that fades  
At coming of the sun;  
Like rags of stuff that fire abrades  
They withered and were done.

The cock, that scares the ghost from earth,  
Crowed as they dwindled down;  
The red sun, happy in his girth,  
Strode up above the town.

Sweetly above the sunny wold  
The bells of churches rang;  
The sheep-bells clinked within the fold,  
And the larks went up and sang;

Sang for the setting free of men  
From devils that destroyed;  
The lark, the robin, and the wren,  
They joyed and over-joyed.

The chats, that harbour in the whin,  
Their little sweet throats swelled,  
The blackbird and the thrush joined in,  
The missel-thrush excelled.

Till round the saint the singing made  
A beauty in the air,  
An ecstasy that cannot fade  
But is for ever there.

### CAP ON HEAD

#### A TALE OF THE O'NEILL

O'NEILL took ship, O'Neill set sail,  
And left his wife ashore  
In the foursquare castle like a jail,  
Between the Mull and the Gore.

Many a month he stayed away,  
His lady sorrowed long;  
She heard the tide come twice a day,  
And the sea-lark at his song;

She watched the sun go down in the west,  
And another day begin:  
At nights she made her mate a nest,  
But no mate came therein.

\* \* \* \* \*

One night a red light burned at sea,  
A ship came into port,  
A foot stirred and the horn was blown  
Within the outer court.

It was all dark save up the brae  
The dead moon wore her heel;  
The watchman called, "Who's there the day?"  
A voice said, "The O'Neill."

The watchman flung the great gate back:  
"Come in, lord, to your own."  
O'Neill stood huddled up in black  
Upon the threshold stone.

White as a riser from the dead  
He passed the lintel post.  
"God spare us, lord!" the watchman said,  
"I thought you were a ghost.

"I never heard you come ashore;  
And, look, your ship is gone.  
Are all our fellows dead, my lord,  
That you should come alone?"

O'Neill stood grinning in the porch  
A little breathing space;  
The redness blowing from the torch  
Put colour in his face.

"I've left my ship behind," he said,  
"To join the Scotch King's fleet.  
I've left my men behind," he said,  
"To haul on her fore-sheet.

"I have come home all alone," he said,  
"In a country ship from sea.  
Let my lady know the news," he said,  
"Then open here to me."

Then lights were lit, and men gave hail  
And welcomed him ashore;  
The wife was glad within that jail  
Between the Mull and the Gore.

O'Neil went swimming in the sea  
And hunting up the glen;  
No one could swim or ride as he  
Of all the sons of men.

His wife went happy in the lane  
And singing in the tower;  
The sweet of having him again  
Had ended all the sour.

But Kate, an old crone muttering dark  
About that windy place,  
Did not rejoice; she said: "I mark  
O'Neill has fal'n from grace.

"He has been under the dark star  
Since when he went away.  
Men think that when they wander far  
The black thing becomes grey.

"He has been dipped in the strange vat  
And dyed with the strange dye;  
And then the black thing—what is that  
That dogs him, going by?

"A dog thing, black, goes padding past  
Forever at his heel:  
God help us all to peace at last!  
I fear for the O'Neill.

"His teeth show when the Host does come  
To comfort dying men;  
And in the chapel he is dumb,  
He never says Amen."

She would not speak with the O'Neill,  
But when he crossed her path  
She prayed, as tremblers do that feel  
The devil in his wrath.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so the Time went by, whose hand  
Upheaves the lives of men;  
The cuckoo left his burning land  
To toll along the glen.

So loud the thrushes sung that spring,  
So rich the hawthorn was,  
The air was like a living thing  
Between the sky and the grass.

O'Neill's wife bore a little son,  
And set him on her knee;  
He grew apace to romp and run  
And dabble in the sea.



But one thing strange about the child  
The neighbours noted there:  
That, even if the winds were mild,  
His head was never bare.

His father made him wear a cap  
At all times, night and day,  
Bound round his forehead with a strap  
To keep the cold away.

And up and down the little lad  
Went singing at his game:  
Men marvelled at the grace he had  
To make the wild birds tame.

Men marvelled at the joy he took,  
And at the things he said,  
And at the beauty of his look,  
This little Cap on Head.

And when the nights were dark between  
The new moon and the old,  
And fires were lit, and winds blew keen,  
And old wives' tales were told,

This little son would scramble near  
Beside his mother's place,  
To listen to the tale and peer  
With firelight on his face.

O'Neill would gather to the glow  
With great eyes glittering fierce;  
Old Kate would shake to see him so,  
And cross herself from curse.

\* \* \* \* \*

It fell about hay-harvest time,  
When the Lammass floods were out,  
A ship all green with water-slime  
Stood in and went about.

And anchored off the bight of sand,  
And swam there like a seal,  
With a banner of the bloody hand,  
The flag of the O'Neill.

Then there was cheering in the court  
And hurrying to the beach.

"A ship!" they cried, "a ship in port,  
Brought up in Castle Reach.

"It is our ship. They are our men  
There, coiling up the sheet;  
It is our ship come home agen  
From out the Scotch King's fleet.

"And who 's the noble in the boat  
Comes rowing through the sea?  
His colours are the O'Neill coat,  
But what O'Neill is he?"

\* \* \* \* \*

O'Neill was in his turret tower,  
With writings red and black;  
Kate crossed herself to see him glower  
That tide the ship came back.

He looked long at the anchored ship,  
And at the coming boat;  
The devil writhelled up his lip,  
And snickered in his throat.

He strode the room and bit his nails,  
He bit his flesh with rage,  
As maddened felons do in jails,  
And rats do in a cage.

He looked at Kate, who crossed her breast;  
He heard them cheer below.  
He said: "The wicked cannot rest,  
And now I have to go."

They saw him hurry up the green  
An on into the rain;  
Beyond the brae he was not seen;  
He was not seen again.

\* \* \* \* \*

O'Neill's wife went to watch the boat  
Come driving to the sand;  
The noble in the O'Neill coat  
Stood up and waved his hand.

"That is O'Neill!" the clansmen cried,  
"Or else his very twin."  
"How came he to the ship?" they cried.  
"Just now he was within."

"It is O'Neill," the lady said,  
"And that 's his ship returned.  
And a woman's life 's a school," she said,  
"Where bitter things are learned."

O'Neill called to her through his tears:  
"The bitter days are past.  
I've prayed for this for seven years,  
Now here I am at last."

Then, as the boat's bows cut the strand  
Among the slipping foam,  
He sprang to take his lady's hand;  
He said: "I have come home."

His lady fainted like the dead,  
Beside the slipping sea.  
"This is O'Neill," the servants said,  
"What is that other he?"

"Master," they said, "where have you been  
These seven years and more?"  
"I've served the Scottish King and Queen  
Along the Scottish shore."

"Master," they said, "another came,  
So like in voice and face  
To you, we thought it was the same,  
And so he took your place.

"These seven years he 's ruled us here,  
While you were still at sea,  
And that 's his son that 's coming here,  
Look, Master, that is he."

\* \* \* \* \*

O'Neill took off the wee boy's cap  
And ruffled through his hair;  
He said: "A young tree full of sap,  
A good shoot growing fair."

He turned the hair for men to see,  
And swallowed down his tears;  
He said: "The gods be good to me,  
The boy has devil's ears!"

He took the young child by the heels  
And broke him, head and breast:  
The red hand ridded the O'Neills  
That cuckoo in the nest.

O'Neill flung out the little limbs  
To drift about the bay.  
"Watch, fellows, if he sinks or swims,"  
Was all they heard him say.

He said: "The wicked cannot rest,  
And now I have to go."  
He set his ship's head north and west  
And stood into the flow.

The ship went shining like a seal,  
And dimmed into the rain.  
And no man saw the great O'Neill,  
Nor heard of him again.

## SONNETS

LIKE bones the ruins of the cities stand,  
Like skeletons and skulls with ribs and eyes  
Strewn in the saltness of the desert sand  
Carved with the unread record of King's lies.  
Once they were strong with soldiers, loud with voices,  
The markets clattered as the carts drove through,  
Where now the jackal in the moon rejoices  
And the still asp draws death along the dew.

There at the gates the market men paid toll  
In bronze and silver pennies, long worn thin;  
Wine was a silver penny for a bowl;  
Women they had there, and the moon, and sin.  
And looking from his tower, the watchman saw  
Green fields for miles, the roads, the great King's law.

Now they are gone with all their songs and sins,  
Women and men, to dust; their copper penny,  
Of living, spent, among these dusty inns;  
The glittering One made level with the many.  
Their speech is gone, none speaks it, none can read  
The pictured writing of their conqueror's march;  
The dropping plaster of a fading screed  
Ceils with its mildews the decaying arch.  
The fields are sand, the streets are fallen stones;  
Nothing is bought or sold there, nothing spoken:  
The sand hides all, the wind that blows it moans,  
Blowing more sand until the plinth is broken.  
Day in, day out, no other utterance falls;  
Only the sand, pit-pitting on the walls.

None knows what overthrew that city's pride.  
Some say, the spotted pestilence arose  
And smote them to the marrow, that they died  
Till every pulse was dusty; no man knows.  
Some say, that foreign Kings with all their hosts  
Sieged it with mine and tower till it fell,  
So that the sword shred shrieking flesh from ghosts  
Till every street was empty; who can tell?  
Some think, that in the fields, or in the pit,  
Out of the light, in filth, among the rotten,  
Insects like sands in number, swift as wit,  
Famined the city dead; it is forgotten.  
Only the city's bones stand, gaunt in air,  
Pocked by the pitting sandspecks everywhere.

So shall we be; so will our cities lie,  
Unknown beneath the grasses of the summer,  
Walls without roofs, naves open to the sky,  
Doors open to the wind, the only comer.

And men will grub the ruins, eyes will peer,  
Fingers will grope for pennies, brains will tire  
To chronicle the skills we practised here,  
While still we breathed the wind and trod the mire.  
Oh, like the ghost at dawn, scared by the cock,  
Let us make haste, to let the spirit dive  
Deep in self's sea, until the deeps unlock  
The depths and sunken gold of being alive,  
Till, though our Many pass, a Something stands  
Aloft through Time that covers all with sands.

## THE PASSING STRANGE

Our of the earth to rest or range  
Perpetual in perpetual change,  
The unknown passing through the strange.

Water and saltness held together  
To tread the dust and stand the weather,  
And plough the field and stretch the tether,

To pass the wine-cup and be witty,  
Water the sands and build the city,  
Slaughter like devils and have pity,

Be red with rage and pale with lust,  
Make beauty come, make peace, make trust,  
Water and saltness mixed with dust;

Drive over earth, swim under sea,  
Fly in the eagle's secrecy,  
Guess where the hidden comets be;

Know all the deathly seeds that still  
Queen Helen's beauty, Cæsar's will,  
And slay them even as they kill;

Fashion an altar for a rood,  
Defile a continent with blood,  
And watch a brother starve for food:

Love like a madman, shaking, blind,  
Till self is burnt into a kind  
Possession of another mind;

Brood upon beauty, till the grace  
Of beauty with the holy face  
Brings peace into the bitter place;

Probe in the lifeless granites, scan  
The stars for hope, for guide, for plan;  
Live as a woman or a man;

Fasten to lover or to friend,  
Until the heart break at the end  
The break of death that cannot mend;

Then to lie useless, helpless, still,  
Down in the earth, in dark, to fill  
The roots of grass or daffodil.

Down in the earth, in dark, alone,  
A mockery of the ghost in bone,  
The strangeness, passing the unknown.

Time will go by, that outlasts clocks,  
Dawn in the tnoorps will rouse the cocks,  
Sunset be glory on the rocks:

But it, the thing, will never heed  
Even the rootling from the seed  
Thrusting to suck it for its need.

\* \* \* \* \*

Since moons decay and suns decline,  
How else should end this life of mine?  
Water and saltness are not wine.

But in the darkest hour of night,  
When even the foxes peer for sight,  
The byre-cock crows; he feels the light.

So, in this water mixed with dust,  
The byre-cock spirit crows from trust  
That death will change because it must;

For all things change, the darkness changes,  
The wandering spirits change their ranges,  
The corn is gathered to the granges.

The corn is sown again, it grows;  
The stars burn out, the darkness goes;  
The rhythms change, they do not close.

They change, and we, who pass like foam,  
Like dust blown through the streets of Rome,  
Change ever, too; we have no home,

Only a beauty, only a power,  
Sad in the fruit, bright in the flower,  
Endlessly erring for its hour,

But gathering, as we stray, a sense  
Of Life, so lovely and intense,  
It lingers when we wander hence,

That those who follow feel behind  
Their backs, when all before is blind,  
Our joy, a rampart to the mind.

### ANIMULA

THIS is the place, this house beside the sea;  
This was the setting where they played their parts.  
Two men, who knew them all, have talked to me:  
Beauty she had, and all had passionate hearts.  
I write this in the window where she sat.  
Two fields, all green with summer, lie below;  
Then the grey sea, at thought, cloud-coloured, flat,  
Wind-dappled from the glen, the tide at flow.  
Her portrait and her husband's hang together,  
One on each side the fire; it is close;  
The tree-tops toss, it is a change of weather.  
They were most lovely and unhappy, those,  
That married pair and he who loved too well;  
This was the door by which they entered hell.



This is a drawing of her as a child,  
This is she wed; the faces are the same,  
Only the beauty of the babe is wild,  
The woman's beauty has been broken tame.  
Witty, bright, gentle, earnest, with great eyes,  
Dark hair in heaps, pure colour, lips that smile;  
Beauty that is more wisdom than the wise  
Lived in this woman for a little while.  
Dressed in that beauty that our mothers wore  
(So touching now), she looks out of the frame  
With stag-like eyes, that wept till they were sore  
Many 's the time, till she was broken tame.  
Witty, bright, gentle, earnest, even so,  
Destiny calls and spirits come and go.

This is her husband in his youth; and this  
Is he in manhood; this is he in age.  
There is a devil in those eyes of his,  
A glittering devil, restless in his cage.  
A grand man, with a beauty and a pride,  
A manner and a power and a fire,  
With beaks of vultures eating at his side,  
The great brain mad with unfulfilled desire.  
"With grand ideas," they say; tall, wicked, proud,  
Cold, cruel, bitter, clever, dainty, skilled;  
Splendid to see, a head above the crowd;  
Splendid with every strength, yet unfulfilled.  
Cutting himself (and all those near) with hate  
From that sharp mind which should have shaped a state.

And many years ago I saw the third  
Bowed in old age and mad with misery;  
Mad with the bright eyes of the eagle-bird,  
Burning his heart at fires of memory.  
He stood behind a chair, and bent and muttered;  
Grand still, grey, sunburnt, bright with mad eyes brown,  
Burning, though dying, like a torch that guttered  
That once had lit Queen Helen through the town.

I only saw him once: I saw him go  
Leaning uphill his body to the rain,  
Too good a man for life to punish so,  
Theirs were the pride and passion, his the pain.  
His old coat flapped; the little children turned  
To see him pass, that passionate age that burned.

"I knew them well, all three," the old man said;  
"He was an unused force, and she a child.  
She caught him with her beauty, being a maid.  
The thought that she had trapped him drove him wild.  
He would not work with others, could not rest,  
And nothing here could use him or engage him;  
Yet here he stayed, with devils in his breast,  
To blast the woman who had dared to cage him.  
Then, when the scholar came, it made the three:  
She turned to him, and he, he turned to her.  
They both were saints: elopement could not be;  
So here they stayed, and passion plied the spur.  
Then the men fought, and later she was found  
In that green pool beyond the headland, drowned.

"They carried her drowned body up the grass  
Here to the house; they laid it on the bed  
(This very bed, where I have slept, it was).  
The scholar begged to see her, being dead.  
The husband walked downstairs, to see him there  
Begging to see her as one asks an alms.  
He spat at him and cut his cheek-bone bare.  
'There 's pay,' he said, 'my poet, for your psalms.'  
And then they fought together at the door,  
Biting each other, like two dogs, while she  
Lay dead, poor woman, dripping on the floor  
Out of her hair the death-drops of the sea.  
Later, they fought whenever they might meet,  
In church, or in the fields, or in the street."

Up on the hill another aged man  
Remembered them. He said: "They were afraid;  
They feared to end the passions they began.  
They held the cards, and yet they never played.

He should have broken from her at all cost;  
She should have loved her lover and gone free.  
They all held winning cards, and yet they lost;  
So two were wrecked and one drowned in the sea.  
Some harshness or some law, or else some fear  
Stifled their souls; God help us! when we know  
Certainly, certain things, the way is clear.  
And yet they paid, and one respects them so.  
Perhaps they were too fine. I know not, I.  
Men must have mercy, being ripe to die."

So this old house of mourning was the stage  
(This house and those green fields) for all that woe.  
There are her books, her writing on the page;  
In those choked beds she made the flowers grow.  
Most desolate it is, the rain is pouring,  
The trees all toss and drip and scatter evil,  
The floods are out, the waterfall is roaring,  
The bar is mad with many a leaping devil.  
And in this house the wind goes whining wild,  
The door blows open, till I think to see  
That delicate sweet woman, like a child,  
Standing with great dark stag's eyes watching me;  
Watching as though her sorrow might make plain  
(Had I but wit) the meaning of such pain.

I wonder if she sang in this old room.  
Ah, never! No; they tell me that she stood  
For hours together staring into gloom  
Out of the prison bars of flesh and blood.  
So, when the ninth wave drowned her, haply she  
Wakened, with merging senses, till she blent  
Into the joy and colour of the sea,  
One with the purpose of the element.  
And there, perhaps, she cannot feel the woe  
Passed in this rotting house, but runs like light  
Over the billows where the clippers go,  
One with the blue sea's pureness of delight;  
Laughing, perhaps, at that old woe of hers  
Chained in the cage with fellow-prisoners.

He died in that lone cottage near the sea.  
In the grey morning when the tide was turning  
The wards of life slipped back and set him free  
From cares of meat and dress, from joys and yearning.  
Then like an old man gathering strength, he strayed  
Over the beach, and strength came into him,  
Beauty that never threatened nor betrayed  
Made bright the eyes that sorrow had made dim;  
So that upon that stretch of barren sand  
He knew his dreams; he saw her beauty run  
With Sorrowful Beauty, laughing, hand in hand;  
He heard the trumpets blow in Avalon.  
He saw the golden statue stretching down  
The wreath, for him, of roses, in a crown.

They say that as her husband lay a-dying  
He clamoured for a chain to beat the hound.  
They say that all the garden rang with crying  
That came out of the air, out of the ground,  
Out of the waste that was his soul, may be,  
Out of the running wolf-hound of his soul,  
That had been kennelled in and now broke free  
Out to the moors where stags go, past control.  
All through his life his will had kennelled him;  
Now he was free, and with a hackling fell  
He snarled out of the body to the dim,  
To run the spirits with the hounds of hell;  
To run forever at the quarry gone,  
The uncaught thing a little farther on.

So, one by one, Time took them to his keeping,  
Those broken lanterns that had held his fire;  
Dust went to dust, and flesh had time for sleeping,  
And soul the stag escaped the hound desire.  
And now, perhaps, the memory of their hate  
Has passed from them, and they are friends again,  
Laughing at all the trouble of this state  
Where men and women work each other pain.

And in the wind that runs along the glen  
 Beating at cottage doors, they may go by,  
 Exulting now, and helping sorrowing men  
 To do some little good before they die.  
 For from these ploughed-up souls the spirit brings  
 Harvest at last, and sweet from bitter things.

### THE LEMMINGS

ONCE in a hundred years the Lemmings come  
 Westward, in search of food, over the snow;  
 Westward until the salt sea drowns them dumb;  
 Westward, till all are drowned, those Lemmings go.

Once, it is thought, there was a westward land  
 (Now drowned) where there was food for those starved  
                   things,  
 And memory of the place has burnt its brand  
 In the little brains of all the Lemming kings.

Perhaps, long since, there was a land beyond  
 Westward from death, some city, some calm place  
 Where one could taste God's quiet and be fond  
 With the little beauty of a human face;

But now the land is drowned. Yet still we press  
 Westward, in search, to death, to nothingness.

### ✓ FORGET

FORGET all these, the barren fool in power,  
 The madman in command, the jealous O,  
 The bitter world biting its bitter hour,  
 The cruel now, the happy long ago.

Forget all these, for, though they truly hurt,  
 Even to the soul, they are not lasting things:  
 Men are no gods; we tread the city dirt,  
 But in our souls we can be queens and kings.

And I, O Beauty, O divine white wonder,  
On whom my dull eyes, blind to all else, peer,  
Have you for peace, that not the whole war's thunder,  
Nor the world's wreck, can threat or take from here.

So you remain, though all man's passionate seas  
Roar their blind tides, I can forget all these.

## ON GROWING OLD ✓

BE with me, Beauty, for the fire is dying;  
My dog and I are old, too old for roving.  
Man, whose young passion sets the spindrift flying,  
Is soon too lame to march, too cold for loving.  
I take the book and gather to the fire,  
Turning old yellow leaves; minute by minute  
The clock ticks to my heart. A withered wire,  
Moves a thin ghost of music in the spinet.  
I cannot sail your seas, I cannot wander  
Your cornland, nor your hill-land, nor your valleys  
Ever again, nor share the battle yonder  
Where the young knight the broken squadron rallies  
Only stay quiet while my mind remembers  
The beauty of fire from the beauty of embers.

Beauty, have pity! for the strong have power,  
The rich their wealth, the beautiful their grace,  
Summer of man its sunlight and its flower,  
Spring-time of man all April in a face.  
Only, as in the jostling in the Strand,  
Where the mob thrusts or loiters or is loud,  
The beggar with the saucer in his hand  
Asks only a penny from the passing crowd,  
So, from this glittering world with all its fashion,  
Its fire, and play of men, its stir, its march,  
Let me have wisdom, Beauty, wisdom and passion,  
Bread to the soul, rain where the summers parch.  
Give me but these, and, though the darkness close  
Even the night will blossom as the rose.

## LYRIC

Give me a light that I may see her,  
Give me a grace that I may be her,  
Give me a clue that I may find her  
Whose beauty shows the brain behind her.  
Stars and women and running rivers,  
And sunny water where a shadow shivers,  
And the little brooks that lift the grasses,  
And April flowers are where she passes.  
And all things good and all things kind  
Are glimmerings coming from her mind,  
And in the may a blackbird sings  
Against her very heart's springs.

**RIGHT ROYAL**





## RIGHT ROYAL

### PART I

**A**N hour before the race they talked together,  
A pair of lovers, in the mild March weather,  
Charles Cothill and the golden lady, Em.

Beautiful England's hands had fashioned them.

He was from Sleins, that manor up the Lithe.  
Riding the Downs had made his body blithe;  
Stalwart he was, and springy, hardened, swift,  
Able for perfect speed with perfect thrift,  
Man to the core yet moving like a lad.  
Dark honest eyes with merry gaze he had,  
A fine firm mouth, and wind tan on his skin.  
He was to ride, and ready to begin.

He was to ride Right Royal, his own horse,  
In the English 'Chasers' Cup on Compton Course.  
Under the pale coat reaching to his spurs  
One saw his colours, which were also hers,  
Narrow alternate bars of blue and white,  
Blue as the speedwell's eye and silver bright.

What with hard work and waiting for the race,  
Trouble and strain were marked upon his face;  
Men would have said that something worried him.

She was a golden lady, dainty, trim,  
As like the love time as laburnum blossom.  
Mirth, truth and goodness harboured in her bosom.  
Pure colour and pure contour and pure grace  
Made the sweet marvel of her singing face;

She was the very May-time that comes in  
When hawthorns bud and nightingales begin.  
To see her tread the red-tipped daisies white  
In the green fields all golden with delight  
Was to believe Queen Venus come again,  
She was as dear as sunshine after rain;  
Such loveliness this golden lady had.  
All lovely things and pure things made her glad,  
But most she loved the things her lover loved,  
The windy Downlands where the kestrels roved,  
The sea of grasses that the wind runs over  
Where blundering beetles drunken from the clover  
Stumble about the startled passer-by.  
There on the great grass underneath the sky  
She loved to ride with him for hours on hours,  
Smelling the seasoned grass and those small flowers,  
Milkworts and thymes, that grow upon the Downs.  
There from a chalk edge they would see the towns:  
Smoke above trees, by day, or spires of churches  
Gleaming with swinging wind-cocks on their perches.  
Or windows flashing in the light, or trains  
Burrowing below white smoke across the plains.  
By night, the darkness of the valley set  
With scattered lights to where the ridges met  
And three great glares making the heaven dun,  
Oxford and Wallingford and Abingdon.

"Dear, in an hour," said Charles, "the race begins.  
Before I start I must confess my sins.  
For I have sinned, and now it troubles me."

"I saw that you were sad," said Emily.

"Before I speak," said Charles, "I must premise,  
You were not here to help me to be wise,  
And something happened, difficult to tell.  
Even if I sinned, I feel I acted well,  
From inspiration, mad as that may seem.  
Just at the grey of dawn I had a dream.

It was the strangest dream I ever had.  
It was the dream that drove me to be mad.

I dreamed I stood upon the race-course here,  
Watching a blinding rainstorm blowing clear,  
And as it blew away, I said aloud,  
'That rain will make soft going on the ploughed.'  
And instantly I saw the whole great course,  
The grass, the brooks, the fences topped with gorse,  
Gleam in the sun; and all the ploughland shone  
Blue, like a marsh, though now the rain had gone.  
And in my dream I said, 'That plough will be  
Terrible work for some, but not for me.  
Not for Right Royal.'

And a voice said, 'No,  
Not for Right Royal.'

And I looked, and, lo!  
There was Right Royal, speaking, at my side.  
The horse's very self, and yet his hide  
Was like, what shall I say? like pearl on fire,  
A white soft glow of burning that did twine  
Like soft white-heat with every breath he drew.  
A glow, with utter brightness running through;  
Most splendid, though I cannot make you see.

His great crest glittered as he looked at me  
Crimiered with spitting sparks; he stamped the ground  
All creak and fire, trembling like a hound,  
And glad of me, and eager to declare  
His horse's mind.

And I was made aware  
That, being a horse, his mind could only say  
Few things to me. He said, 'It is my day,  
My day, to-day; I shall not have another.'

And as he spoke he seemed a younger brother  
Most near, and yet a horse, and then he grinned  
And tossed his crest and crimier to the wind,  
And looked down to the Water with an eye  
All fire of soul to gallop dreadfully.

All this was strange, but then a stranger thing  
Came afterwards. I woke all shivering  
With wonder and excitement, yet with dread  
Lest the dream meant that Royal should be dead,

Lest he had died and come to tell me so.  
 I hurried out; no need to hurry, though;  
 There he was shining like a morning star.  
 Now hark. You know how cold his manners are,  
 Never a whinny for his dearest friend.  
 To-day he heard me at the courtyard end,  
 He left his breakfast with a shattering call,  
 A View Halloo, and, swinging in his stall,  
 Ran up to nuzzle me with signs of joy.  
 It staggered Harding and the stable-boy,  
 And Harding said, 'What's come to him to-day?  
 He must have had a dream he beat the bay.'

Now that was strange; and, what was stranger, this,  
 I know he tried to say those words of his,  
 'It is my day'; and Harding turned to me:  
 'It is his day to-day, that 's plain to see.'  
 Right Royal nuzzled at me as he spoke.  
 That staggered me. I felt that I should choke.  
 It came so pat upon my unsaid thought,  
 I asked him what he meant.

He answered, 'Naught.

It only came into my head to say.  
 But there it is. 'To-day 's Right Royal's day.'

That was the dream. I cannot put the glory  
 With which it filled my being in a story.  
 No one can tell a dream.

Now to confess.  
 The dream made daily life a nothingness,  
 Merely a mould which white-hot beauty fills,  
 Pure from some source of passionate joys and skills,  
 And being flooded with my vision thus,  
 Certain of winning, puffed and glorious,  
 Walking upon this earth-top like a king,  
 My judgment went. I did a foolish thing,  
 I backed myself to win with all I had.

Now that it 's done I see that it was mad,  
 But still, I had to do it, feeling so.  
 That is the full confession; now you know."

SHE. The thing is done, and being done, must be.  
You cannot hedge. Would you had talked with me  
Before you plunged. But there, the thing is done.

HE. Do not exaggerate the risks I run.  
Right Royal was a bad horse in the past,  
A rogue, a cur, but he is cured at last;  
For I was right, his former owner wrong,  
He is a game good 'chaser, going strong.  
He and my lucky star may pull me through.

SHE. O grant they may; but think what 's racing you,  
Think for a moment what his chances are  
Against Sir Lopez, Soyland, Kubbadar.

HE. You said you thought Sir Lopez past his best.  
I do, myself.

SHE. But there are all the rest.  
Peterkinooks, Red Ember, Counter-Vair,  
And then Grey Glory and the Irish mare.

HE. She 's scratched. The rest are giving me a stone.  
Unless the field hides something quite unknown  
I stand a chance. The going favours me  
The ploughland will be bogland certainly,  
After this rain. If Royal keeps his nerve,  
If no one cannons me at jump or swerve,  
I stand a chance. And though I dread to fail,  
This passionate dream that drives me like a sail  
Runs in my blood, and cries, that I shall win.

SHE. Please Heaven you may; but now (for me) begin  
Again the horrors that I cannot tell,  
Horrors that made my childhood such a hell,  
Watching my Father near the gambler's grave  
Step after step, yet impotent to save.

You do not know, I never let you know,  
The horror of those days of long ago  
When Father raced to ruin. Every night  
After my Mother took away the light,

For weeks before each meeting, I would see  
Horrible horses looking down on me,  
Laughing and saying, "We shall beat your Father.  
Then when the meetings came I used to gather  
Close up to Mother, and we used to pray,  
'O God, for Christ's sake, let him win to-day.'  
And then we had to watch for his return,  
Craning our necks to see if we could learn,  
Before he entered, what the week had been.

Now I shall look on such another scene  
Of waiting on the race-chance. For to-day,  
Just as I did with Father, I shall say,  
'Yes, he'll be beaten by a head, or break  
A stirrup leather at the wall, or take  
The brook too slow, and, then, all will be lost.'

Daily, in mind, I saw the Winning Post,  
The Straight, and all the horses' glimmering forms  
Rushing between the railings' yelling swarms,  
My Father's colours leading. Every day,  
Closing my eyes, I saw them die away,  
In the last strides, and lose, lose by a neck,  
Lose by an inch, but lose, and bring the wreck  
A day's march nearer. Now begins again  
The agony of waiting for the pain.  
The agony of watching ruin come  
Out of man's dreams to overwhelm a home.

Go now, my dear. Before the race is due  
We'll meet again, and then I'll speak with you.

In a race-course box behind the Stand  
Right Royal shone from a strapper's hand.  
A big dark bay with a restless tread,  
Fetlock deep in a wheat-straw bed;  
A noble horse of a nervy blood,  
By O Mon Roi out of Rectitude.  
Something quick in his eye and ear  
Gave a hint that he might be queer.

In front, he was all to a horseman's mind;  
Some thought him a trifle light behind.  
By two good points might his rank be known,  
A beautiful head and a Jumping Bone.

He had been the hope of Sir Button Budd,  
Who bred him there at the Fletchings stud,  
But the Fletchings jockey had flogged him cold  
In a narrow thing as a two-year-old.  
After that, with his sulks and swerves,  
Dread of the crowd and fits of nerves,  
Like a wastrel bee who makes no honey,  
He had hardly earned his entry money.

Liking him still, though he failed at racing,  
Sir Button trained him for steeple-chasing.  
He jumped like a stag, but his heart was cowed;  
Nothing would make him face the crowd.  
When he reached the Straight where the crowds began  
He would make no effort for any man.

Sir Button sold him, Charles Cothill bought him,  
Rode him to hounds and soothed and taught him.  
After two years' care Charles felt assured  
That his horse's broken heart was cured,  
And the jangled nerves in tune again.

And now, as proud as a King of Spain,  
He moved in his box with a restless tread,  
His eyes like sparks in his lovely head,  
Ready to run between the roar  
Of the stands that face the Straight once more;  
Ready to race, though blown, though beat,  
As long as his will could lift his feet;  
Ready to burst his heart to pass  
Each gasping horse in that street of grass.

John Harding said to his stable-boy:  
"Would looks were deeds, for he looks a joy.  
He 's come on well in the last ten days."  
The horse looked up at the note of praise,



He fixed his eye upon Harding's eye,  
Then he put all thought of Harding by,  
Then his ears went back and he clipped all clean  
The manger's well where his oats had been.

John Harding walked to the stable-yard,  
His brow was worried with thinking hard.  
He thought, "His sire was a Derby winner,  
His legs are steel, and he loves his dinner,  
And yet of old, when they made him race,  
He sulked or funk'd like a real disgrace;  
Now for man or horse, I say, it 's plain,  
That what once he 's been, he'll be again.

For all his looks, I'll take my oath  
That horse is a cur, and slack as sloth.  
He'll funk at a great big field like this,  
And the lad won't cure that sloth of his.  
He stands no chance, and yet Bungay says  
He 's been backed all morning a hundred ways  
He was twenty to one last night, by Heaven:  
Twenty to one, and now he 's seven.

Well, one of these fools whom fortune loves  
Has made up his mind to go for the gloves;  
But here 's Dick Cappell to bring me news."

Dick Cappell came from a London Mews,  
His fleshless face was a stretched skin sheath  
For the narrow pear of the skull beneath.  
He had cold blue eyes, and a mouth like a slit,  
With yellow teeth sticking out from it.  
There was no red blood in his lips or skin,  
He'd a sinister, hard, sharp soul within.  
Perhaps, the thing that he most enjoyed  
Was being rude when he felt annoyed.  
He sucked his cane, he nodded to John,  
He asked, "What 's brought your lambkin on?"

John said, "I had meant to ask of you  
Who 's backing him, Dick; I hoped you knew."

Dick said, "Pill Stewart has placed the money.  
I don't know whose."

John said, "That's funny."  
"Why funny?" said Dick; but John said naught;  
He looked at the horse's legs and thought.  
Yet at last he said, "It beats me clean,  
But whoever he is, he must be green.  
There are eight in this could give him a stone,  
And twelve should beat him on form alone.  
The lad can ride, but it 's more than riding  
That will give the bay and the grey a hiding."

Dick sucked his cane and looked at the horse  
With "Nothing 's certain on Compton Course.  
He looks a peach. Have you tried him high?"  
John said, "You know him as well as I;  
What he has done and what he can do.  
He 's been ridden to hounds this year or two.  
When last he was raced, he made the running  
For a stable companion twice at Sunning.  
He was placed, bad third, in the Blowbury Cup  
And second at Tew with Kingston up.  
He sulked at Folkestone, he funk'd at Speen,  
He baulked at the ditch at Hampton Green.  
Nick Kingston thought him a slug and cur,  
'You must cut his heart out to make him stir.'  
But his legs are iron; he 's fine and fit."

Dick said, "Maybe; but he's got no grit.  
With to-day's big field, on a course like this,  
He will come to grief with that funk of his.  
Well, it 's queer, to me, that they've brought him on.  
It 's Kubbadar's race. Good morning, John."

When Dick had gone from the stable yard,  
John wrote a note on a racing card.  
He said, "Since Stewart has placed the com.,  
It 's Mr. Cothill he got it from.  
Now why should that nice young man go blind  
And back his horse? Has he lost his mind?

Such a nice young fellow, so civil-spoken,  
Should have more sense than to get him broken,

For broken he'll be as sure as eggs  
If he puts his money on horses' legs.  
And to trust to this, who 's a nice old thing,  
But can no more win than a cow can sing.  
Well, they say that wisdom is dearly bought,  
A world of pain for a want of thought;  
But why should he back what stands no chance,  
No more than the Rowley Mile 's in France?  
Why didn't he talk of it first with me?

Well, Lord, we trainers can let it be,  
Why can't these owners abstain the same?  
It can't be aught but a losing game.  
He'll finish ninth; he'll be forced to sell  
His horse, his stud, and his home as well;  
He'll lose his lady, and all for this—  
A daft belief in that horse of his.

It 's nothing to me, a man might say,  
That a rich young fool should be cast away,  
Though what he does with his own, in fine,  
Is certainly no concern of mine.  
I'm paid to see that his horse is fit,  
I can't engage for an owner's wit.  
For the heart of a man may love his brother,  
But who can be wise to save another?  
Souls are our own to save from burning,  
We must all learn how, and pay for learning.

And now, by the clock, that bell that went  
Was the Saddling Bell for the first event.

Since the time comes close, it will save some swearing  
If we get beforehand, and start preparing."

The roads were filled with a drifting crowd,  
Many mouth-organs droned aloud,  
A couple of lads in scarlet hats,  
Yellow trousers and purple spats,  
Dragged their banjos, wearily eyeing  
Passing brakes full of sportsmen Hi-ing.

Then with a long horn blowing a glory  
Came the four-in-hand of the young Lord Tory,  
The young Lord's eyes on his leaders' ears  
And the blood-like team going by to cheers.  
Then in a brake came cheerers and hooters  
Peppering folk from tin peashooters;  
The Green Man's Friendly in bright mauve caps  
Followed fast in the Green Man's traps.  
The crowd made way for the traps to pass,  
Then a drum beat up with a blare of brass,  
Medical students smart as paint  
Sang gay songs of a sad complaint.  
A wolf-eyed man who carried a kipe  
Whistled as shrill as a man could pipe,  
Then paused and grinned with his gaps of teeth,  
Crying, "Here 's your colours for Compton Heath,  
All the colours of all the starters,  
For gentlemen's ties and ladies' garters;  
Here you have them, penny a pin,  
Buy your colours and see them win.  
Here you have them, the favourites' own,  
Sir Lopez' colours, the blue-white roan,  
For all the races and what'll win 'em.  
Real jockey's silk with a pin to pin 'em."

Out of his kipe he sold to many  
Bright silk buttons and charged a penny.

A bookie walked with his clerk beside him,  
His stool on his shoulders seemed to ride him,  
His white top-hat bore a sign which ran  
"Your old pal Bunkie the working man."  
His clothes were a check of three-inch squares,  
"Bright brown and fawn with the pearls in pairs."  
Double pearl buttons ran down the side,  
The knees were tight and the ankles wide.  
A bright, thick chain made of discs of tin  
Secured a board from his waist to chin.  
The men in the brakes that passed at trot  
Read "First past Post" and "Run or Not."  
The bookie's face was an angry red.  
His eyes seemed rolling inside his head.

His clerk was a lean man, secret, spare,  
With thin lips knowing and damp black hair.  
A big black bag much weathered with rain  
Hung round his neck by a leathered chain.

Seven linked dancers singing a song  
Bowed and kicked as they danced along,  
The middleman thrust and pulled and squeezed  
A concertina to tunes that pleased.  
After them, honking, with Hey, Hey, Hey,  
Came drivers thrusting to clear the way,  
Drivers vexed by the concertina,  
Saying, "Go, bury that d——d hyena."  
Drivers dusty with wind-red faces  
Leaning out of their driving places.  
The dancers mocked them and called them names:  
"Look at our butler," "Drive on, James."  
The cars drove past and the dust rose after,  
Little boys chased them yelling with laughter,  
Clambering on them when they slowed  
For a dirty ride down a perch of road.

A dark green car with a smart drab lining  
Passed with a stately pair reclining;  
Peering walkers standing aside  
Saw Soyland's owner pass with his bride,  
Young Sir Eustace, biting his lip,  
Pressing his chin with his finger-tip,  
Nerves on edge, as he could not choose,  
From thought of the bets he stood to lose.  
His lady, a beauty whom thought made pale,  
Prayed from fear that the horse might fail.  
A bright brass rod on the motor's bonnet  
Carried her husband's colours on it.  
Scarlet spots on a field of cream;  
She stared ahead in a kind of dream.

Then came cabs from the railway stations,  
Carrying men from all the nations,  
Olive skinned French with clipped moustaches,  
Almond-eyed like Paris apaches.  
Rosy French with their faces shining  
From joy of living and love of dining.

Silent Spaniards, merry Italians,  
Nobles, commoners, saints, rapsallions;  
Russians tense with the quest of truth  
That maddens manhood and saddens youth;  
Learned Norwegians hale and limber,  
Brown from the barques new in with timber.  
Oregon men of six feet seven  
With backs from Atlas and hearts from Heaven.  
Orleans Creoles, ready for duels,  
Their delicate ears with scarlet jewels,  
Green silk handkerchiefs round their throats,  
In from sea with the cotton boats.  
Portuguese and Brazilianos,  
Men from the mountains, men from the Llanos,  
Men from the Pampas, men from the Sierras,  
Men from the mines of the Cordilleras,  
Men from the flats of the tropic mud  
Where the butterfly glints his mail with blood;  
Men from the pass where day by day  
The sun'd heat scales the rocks away;  
Men from the hills where night by night  
The sheep-bells give the heart delight;  
Indians, Lascars and Bengalese,  
Greeks from the mainland, Greeks from the seas;  
All kinds of bodies, all kinds of faces,  
All were coming to see the races,  
Coming to see Sir Lopez run  
And watch the English having their fun.

The Carib boxer from Hispaniola  
Wore a rose in his tilted bowler;  
He drove a car with a yellow panel,  
He went full speed and he drove a channel.

Then came dog-carts and traps and wagons  
With hampers of lunches, pies and flacons,  
Bucks from city and flash young bloods  
With vests "cut saucy" to show their studs,  
Hawbuck Towler and Spicey Random  
Tooled in style in a rakish tandem.  
Blood Dick Haggit and Bertie Askins  
Had dancers' skirts on their horses' gaskins;

Crash Pete Snounce with that girl of Dowser's  
Drove a horse that was wearing trousers;  
The waggonette from The Old Pier Head  
Drove to the tune "My Monkey's Dead."

The costermongers as smart as sparrows  
Brought their wives in their donkey barrows.  
The clean-legged donkeys, clever and cunning,  
Their ears cocked forward, their neat feet running,  
Their carts and harness flapping with flags,  
Were bright as heralds and proud as stags.  
And there in pride in the flapping banners  
Were the costers' selves in blue bandannas,  
And the costers' wives in feathers curling,  
And their sons, with their sweet mouth-organs skirling.

And from midst of the road to the roadside shifting  
The crowd of the world on foot went drifting,  
Standing aside on the trodden grass  
To chaff as they let the traffic pass.  
Then back they flooded, singing and cheering,  
Plodding forward and disappearing,  
Up to the course to take their places,  
To lunch and gamble and see the races.

The great Grand Stand, made grey by the weather,  
Flaunted colours that tugged their tether;  
Tier upon tier the wooden seats  
Were packed as full as the London streets  
When the King and Queen go by in state.

Click, click, clack, went the turnstile gate;  
The orange sellers cried "Fat and fine  
Seville oranges, sweet, like wine:  
Twopence apiece, all juice, all juice."  
The pea and the thimble caught their goose.

Two white-faced lurchers, not over-clean,  
Urged the passers to "spot the queen."  
They flicked three cards that the world might choose,  
They cried "All prizes. You cannot lose.  
Come, pick the lady. Only a shilling."  
One of their friends cried out, "I'm willing."

He "picked the lady" and took his pay,  
And he cried, "It 's giving money away."

Men came yelling "Cards of the races";  
Men hawked matches and studs and laces;  
Gipsy women in green shawls dizen'd  
Read girls' fortunes with eyes that glistened;  
Negro minstrels on banjoes strumming  
Sang at the stiles to people coming.

Like glistening beetles clustered close,  
The myriad motors parked in rows,  
The bonnets flashed, and the brass did clink,  
As the drivers poured their motors drink.

The March wind blew the smell of the crowd,  
All men there seemed crying aloud,  
But over the noise a louder roar  
Broke, as the wave that bursts on shore  
Drowns the roar of the wave that comes,  
So this roar rose on the lesser hums,  
"I back the Field. I back the Field."

Man who lives under sentence sealed,  
Tragical man, who has but breath  
For few brief years as he goes to death,  
Tragical man by strange winds blown  
To live in crowds ere he die alone,  
Came in his jovial thousands massing  
To see Life moving and beauty passing.

They sucked their fruit in the wooden tiers  
And flung the skins at the passers' ears;  
Drumming their heels on the planks below,  
They sang of Dolly of Idaho.  
Past, like a flash, the first race went.

The time drew by to the great event.

At a quarter to three the big bell pealed;  
The horses trooped to the Saddling Field.



Covered in clothing, horse and mare  
Pricked their ears at the people there;  
Some showed devil, and some, composure,  
As they trod their way to the great enclosure.

When the clock struck three and the men weighed out,  
Charles Cothill shook, though his heart was stout.  
The thought of his bets, so gaily laid,  
Seemed a stone the more when he sat and weighed.

As he swung in the scales and nursed his saddle,  
It seemed to him that his brains would addle;  
For now that the plunger reached the brink,  
The risk was more than he liked to think.

In ten more minutes his future life,  
His hopes of home with his chosen wife,  
Would all depend on a doubtful horse  
In a crowded field over Compton Course.

He had backed Right Royal for all he owned.  
At thought of his want of sense he groaned.  
"All for a dream of the night," he thought.  
He was right for weight at eleven naught.

Then Em's sweet face rose up in his brain,  
He cursed his will that had dealt her pain:  
To hurt sweet Emmy and lose her love  
Was madman's folly by all above.  
He saw too well as he crossed the yard  
That his madman's plunge had borne her hard.  
"To wring sweet Em like her drunken father,  
I'd fall at the Pitch and end it rather.  
Oh, I hope, hope, hope, that her golden heart  
Will give me a word before I start.  
If I thought our love should have come to wreck,  
I'd pull Right Royal and break my neck,  
And Monkery's shoe might kick my brains out,  
That my own heart's blood might wash my stains out.  
But even if Emmy, my sweet, forgive,  
I'm a ruined man, so I need not live,

For I've backed my horse with my all, by Heaven,  
To be first in a field of thirty-seven,  
And good as he is, the dream 's a lie."

He saw no hope, but to fall and die.

As he left the room for the Saddling Paddock  
He looked as white as the flesh of haddock.

But Love, all seeing, though painted blind,  
Makes wisdom live in a woman's mind.  
His love knew well from her own heart's bleeding  
The word of help that her man was needing;  
And there she stood with her eyes most bright,  
Ready to cheer her heart's delight.

She said, "My darling, I feel so proud  
To see you followed by all the crowd;  
And I shall be proud as I see you win.

Right Royal, Soyland and Peterkin  
Are the three I pick, first, second, third.  
And oh, now listen to what I heard.  
Just now in the park Sir Norman Cooking  
Said, 'Harding, how well Right Royal's looking.  
They've brought him on in the ring, they say.'  
John said, 'Sir Norman, to-day 's his day.'  
And Sir Norman said, 'If I had a monkey  
I'd put it on yours, for he looks so spunky.'

So you see that the experts think as you.  
Now, my own, own, own, may your dream come true,  
As I know it will, as I know it must;  
You have all my prayer and my love and trust.

Oh, one thing more that Sir Norman said,  
'A lot of money has just been laid  
On the mare Gavotte that no one knows.'  
He said, 'She's small, but, my word, she goes.  
Since she bears no weight, if she only jumps,  
She'll put these cracks to their ace of trumps.  
But,' he said, 'she's slight for a course like this.'

That 's all my gossip, so there it is.  
Dear, reckon the words I spoke unspoken,  
I failed in love and my heart is broken.

Now I go to my place to blush with pride  
As the people talk of how well you ride;  
I mean to shout like a bosun's mate  
When I see you lead coming up the Straight.  
Now may all God's help be with you, dear."

"Well, bless you, Em, for your words of cheer.  
And now is the woodcock near the gin.  
Good-bye.

Now, Harding, we'd best begin."

At buckle and billet their fingers wrought,  
Till the sheets were home and the bowlines taut.  
As he knotted the reins and took his stand  
The horse's soul came into his hand,  
And up from the mouth that held the steel  
Came an innermost word, half thought, half feel,  
"My day to-day, O master, O master;  
None shall jump cleaner, none shall go faster,  
Call till you kill me, for I'll obey,  
It 's my day to-day, it 's my day to-day."

In a second more he had found his seat,  
And the standers-by jumped clear of feet,  
For the big dark bay all fire and fettle  
Had his blood in a dance to show his mettle.  
Charles soothed him down till his tricks were gone;  
Then he leaned for a final word from John.

John Harding's face was alert and grim,  
From under his hand he talked to him,  
"It 's none of my business, sir," he said,  
"What you stand to win or the bets you've made,  
But the rumour goes that you've backed your horse.

Now you need no telling of Compton Course.  
It 's a dangerous course at the best of times,  
But on days like this some jumps are crimes;  
With a field like this, nigh forty starting,  
After one time round it'll need re-charting.

Now think it a hunt, the first time round;  
Don't think too much about losing ground,  
Lie out of your ground, for sure as trumps  
There'll be people killed in the first three jumps.  
The second time round, pipe hands for boarding,  
You can see what 's doing and act according.

Now your horse is a slug and a sulker too,  
Your way with the horse I leave to you;  
But, sir, you watch for these jokers' tricks  
And watch that devil on number Six;  
There 's nothing he likes like playing it low,  
What a horse mayn't like or a man mayn't know,  
And what they love when they race a toff  
Is to flurry his horse at taking off.  
The ways of the crook are hard to learn.

Now watch that fence at the outer turn;  
It looks so slight but it 's highly like  
That it 's killed more men than the Dyers' Dyke.  
It 's down in a dip and you turn to take it,  
And men in a bunch, just there, mistake it.  
But well to the right, it 's firmer ground,  
And the quick way there is the long way round.  
In Cannibal's year, in just this weather,  
There were five came down at that fence together.  
I called it murder, not riding races.  
You've nothing to fear from the other places,  
Your horse can jump.

Now I'll say no more.  
They say you're on, as I said before.  
It 's none of my business, sir, but still  
I would like to say that I hope you will.  
Sir, I wish you luck. When we two next meet  
I hope to hear how you had them beat."

Charles Cothill nodded with, "Thank you, John.  
We'll try; and, oh, you're a thousand on."

He heard John's thanks, but knew at a glance  
That John was sure that he stood no chance.

He turned Right Royal, he drew deep breath  
With the thought, "Now for it; a ride to death.  
Now come, my beauty, for dear Em's sake,  
And if come you can't, may our necks both break."

And there to his front, with their riders stooping  
For the final word, were the racers trooping.

Out at the gate to cheers and banter  
They paced in pride to begin their canter.

Muscatel with the big white star,  
The roan Red Ember, and Kubbadar,  
Kubbadar with his teeth bared yellow  
At the Dakkanese, his stable-fellow.  
Then Forward-Ho, then a chestnut weed,  
Skysail, slight, with a turn of speed.  
The neat Gavotte under black and coral,  
Then the Mutineer, Lord Leybourne's sorrel,  
Natuna mincing, Syringa sidling,  
Stormalong fighting to break his bridling,  
Thunderbolt dancing with raw nerves quick,  
Trying a savage at Bitter Dick.  
The Ranger (winner three years before),  
Now old, but ready for one try more;  
Hadrian; Thankful; the stable cronies,  
Peterkinooks and Dear Adonis;  
The flashing Rocket, with taking action;  
Exception, backed by the Tencombe faction;  
Old Sir Francis and young King Tony,  
And gaunt Path Finder with great hips bony.

At this, he rode through the open gate  
Into the course to try his fate.  
He heard a roar from a moving crowd;  
Right Royal kindled and cried aloud.  
There was the course, stand, rail and pen,  
Peopled with seventy thousand men;  
Seventy thousand faces staring,  
Carriages parked, a brass band blaring:  
Over the stand the flags in billows  
Bent their poles like the wands of willows.

All men there seemed trying to bawl,  
Yet a few great voices topped them all:  
"I back the Field! I back the Field!"

Right Royal trembled with pride and squealed.

Charles Cothill smiled with relief to find  
This roaring crowd to his horse's mind.

He passed the stand where his lady stood,  
His nerves were tense to the multitude;  
His blood beat hard and his eyes grew dim  
As he knew that some were cheering him.  
Then, as he turned, at his pace's end  
There came a roar as when floods descend.  
All down the Straight from the crowded stands  
Came the yells of voices and clap of hands,  
For with bright bay beauty that shone like flame  
The favourite horse, Sir Lopez, came.

His beautiful hips and splendid shoulders  
And power of stride moved all beholders,  
Moved non-betters to try to bet  
On that favourite horse not beaten yet.  
With glory of power and speed he strode  
To a sea of cheering that moved and flowed  
And followed and heaped and burst like storm  
From the joy of men in the perfect form:  
Cheers followed his path both sides the course.

Charles Cothill sighed when he saw that horse.

The cheering died, then a burst of clapping  
Met Soyland's coming all bright from strapping,  
A big dark brown who was booted thick  
Lest one of the jumps should make him click.  
He moved very big, he'd a head like a fiddle,  
He seemed all ends without any middle,  
But ill as he looked, that outcast racer  
Was a rare good horse and a perfect 'chaser.  
Then The Ghost came on, then Meringue, the bay,  
Then proud Grey Glory, the dapple-grey;

The splendid grey brought a burst of cheers.  
Then Cimmeroon, who had tried for years  
And had thrice been placed and had once been fourth,  
Came trying again the proverb's worth.

Then again, like a wave as it runs a pier,  
On and on, unbroken, there came a cheer  
As Monkery, black as a collier-barge,  
Trode sideways, bickering, taking charge.  
Cross-Molin, from the Blowbury, followed,  
Lucky Shot skipped, Coranto wallowed,  
Then Counter-Vair, the declared-to-win,  
Stable-fellow of Cross-Molin;  
Culverin last, with Cannonade,  
Formed rearguard to the grand parade.

And now, as they turned to go to post,  
The Skysail calfishly barged The Ghost,  
The Ghost lashed out with a bitter knock  
On the tender muscle of Skysail's hock,  
And Skysail's hope of that splendid hour  
Was cut off short like a summer flower.  
From the cantering crowd he limped apart  
Back to the Paddock and did not start.

As they cantered down, Charles Cothill's mind  
Was filled with joy that his horse went kind;  
He showed no sulks, no sloth, no fear,  
But leant on his rein and pricked his ear.  
They lined themselves at the Post to start,  
Charles took his place with a thumping heart.

Excitement running in waves took hold,  
His teeth were chattered, his hands were cold  
His joy to be there was mixed with dread  
To be left at post when they shot ahead.  
The horses sparred as though drunk with wine,  
They bickered and snatched at taking line.

Then a grey-haired man with a hawk-like face  
Read from a list each rider's place.  
Sitting astride his pommely hack,  
He ordered them up or sent them back;

He bade them heed that they jump their nags  
Over every jump between the flags.  
Here Kubbadar, who was pulling double,  
Went sideways, kicking and raising trouble,  
Monkery seconded, kicking and biting,  
Thunderbolt followed by starting fighting.

The starter eyed them and gave the order  
That the three wild horses keep the border,  
With men to hold them to keep them quiet.  
Boys from the stables stopped their riot.  
Out of the line to the edge of the field  
The three wild biters and kickers wheeled;  
Then the rest edged up and pawed and bickered,  
Reached at their reins and snatched and snickered,  
Flung white foam as they stamped their hate  
Of passionate blood compelled to wait.

Then the starter shouted to Charles, "Good heaven,  
This isn't a circus, you on Seven."  
For Royal squirmed like a box of tricks  
And Coranto's rider, the number Six,  
Cursed at Charles for a green young fool  
Who ought to be at a riding school.  
After a minute of swerves and shoving,  
A line like a half-moon started moving,  
Then Rocket and Soyland leaped to stride,  
To be pulled up short and wheeled to side.

Then the trickier riders started thrusting,  
Judging the starter's mind too trusting;  
But the starter said, "You know quite clearly  
That isn't allowed; though you'd like it dearly.

Then Cannonade made a sideways bolt  
That gave Exception an ugly jolt.  
Then the line, re-formed, broke all to pieces.

Then the line re-forms, and the tumult ceases.  
Each man sits tense though his racer dances;  
In a slow, jerked walk the line advances.



And then in a flash, more felt than seen,  
The flag shot down and the course showed green,  
And the line surged forwards and all that glory  
Of speed was sweeping to make a story.

One second before, Charles Cothill's mind  
Had been filled with fear to be left behind,  
But now with a rush, as when hounds leave cover,  
The line broke up and his fear was over.  
A glimmer of bay behind The Ghost  
Showed Dear Adonis still there at post.  
Out to the left, a joy to his backer,  
Kubbadar led the field a cracker,  
The thunder of horses, all fit and foaming,  
Made the blood not care whether death were coming,  
A glimmer of silks, blue, white, green, red,  
Flashed into his eye and went ahead;  
Then hoof-casts scattered, then rushing horses  
Passed at his side with all their forces.  
His blood leapt up but his mind said "No,  
Steady, my darling, slow, go slow.  
In the first time round this ride 's a hunt."

The Turk's Grave Fence made a line in front.

Long years before, when the race began,  
That first of the jumps had maimed a man;  
His Horse, the Turk, had been killed and buried  
There in the ditch by horse-hoofs herried;  
And over the poor Turk's bones at pace  
Now, every year, there goes the race,  
And many a man makes doctor's work  
At the thorn-bound ditch that hides the Turk,  
And every man as he rides that course  
Thinks, there, of the Turk, that good old horse.

The thick thorn-fence stands five feet high,  
With a ditch beyond unseen by eye,  
Which a horse must guess from his urgent rider  
Pressing him there to jump it wider.

And being so near both Stand and Post,  
Out of all the jumps men haunt it most,

And there, with the crowd, and the undulled nerves,  
The old horse balks and the young horse swerves,  
And the good horse falls with the bad on top  
And beautiful boldness comes to stop.

Charles saw the rush of the leading black,  
And the forehands lift and the men sway back;  
He steadied his horse, then with crash and crying  
The top of the Turk's Grave Fence went flying.

Round in a flash, refusing danger,  
Came the Lucky Shot right into Ranger;  
Ranger swerving knocked Bitter Dick,  
Who blundered at it and leaped too quick;  
Then crash went blackthorn as Bitter Dick fell,  
Meringue jumped on him and rolled as well.  
As Charles got over he splashed the dirt  
Of the poor Turk's grave on two men hurt.

Right Royal landed. With cheers and laughter  
Some horses passed him and some came after;  
A fine brown horse strode up beside him,  
It was Thankful running with none to ride him;  
Thankful's rider, dizzy and sick,  
Lay in the mud by Bitter Dick.

In front was the curving street of Course,  
Barred black by the leaps unsmashed by horse.  
A cloud blew by and the sun shone bright,  
Showing the guard-rails gleaming white.  
Little red flags, that gusts blew tense,  
Streamed to the wind at each black fence.

And smiting the turf to clods that scattered  
Was the rush of the race, the thing that mattered,  
A tide of horses in fury flowing,  
Beauty of speed in glory going,  
Kubbadar pulling, romping first,  
Like a big black fox that had made his burst.

And away and away and away they went,  
A visible song of what life meant.

Living in houses, sleeping in bed,  
Going to business, all seemed dead,  
Dead as death to that rush in strife,  
Pulse for pulse with the heart of life.

“For to all,” Charles thought, “when the blood beats high  
Comes the glimpse of that which may not die;  
When the world is stilled, when the wanting dwindles,  
When the mind takes light and the spirit kindles,  
One stands on a peak of this old earth.”

Charles eyed his horses and sang with mirth.  
What of this world that spins through space?  
With red blood running he rode a race,  
The beast's red spirit was one with his,  
Emulous and in ecstasies;  
Joy that from heart to wild heart passes  
In the wild things going through the grasses;  
In the hares in the corn, in shy gazelles  
Running the sand where no man dwells;  
In horses scared at the prairie spring;  
In the dun deer noiseless, hurrying;  
In fish in the dimness scarcely seen,  
Save as shadows shooting in a shaking green;  
In birds in the air, neck-straining, swift,  
Wing touching wing while no wings shift,  
Seen by none, but when stars appear  
A reaper wandering home may hear  
A sigh aloft where the stars are dim,  
Then a great rush going over him:  
This was his; it had linked him close  
To the force by which the comet goes,  
With the rein none sees, with the lash none feels,  
But with fire-mane tossing and flashing heels.

The roar of the race-course died behind them,  
In front were their Fates, they rode to find them,  
With the wills of men, with the strengths of horses,  
They dared the minute with all their forces.

## PART II

STILL pulling double, black Kubbadar led,  
Pulling his rider half over his head;  
Soyland's cream jacket was spotted with red,  
Spotted with dirt from the rush of their tread.

Bright bay Sir Lopez, the loveliest there,  
Galloped at ease as though taking the air,  
Well in his compass with plenty to spare.  
Gavotte and The Ghost and the brown Counter-Vair  
Followed him close with Syringa the mare,  
And the roan horse Red Ember, who went like a hare,  
And Forward-Ho bolting, though his rider did swear.

Keeping this order, they reached the next fence,  
Which was living plashed blackthorn with gorse-toppings  
dense;  
In the gloom of its darkness it loomed up immense.  
And Forward-Ho's glory had conquered his sense  
And he rushed it, not rising, and never went thence.

And down in the ditch where the gorse-spikes were, scattered  
That bright chestnut's soul from his body was shattered  
And his rider shed tears on the dear head all spattered.

King Tony came down, but got up with a stumble,  
His rider went sideways, but knew how to tumble,  
And got up and remounted, though the pain made him  
humble,  
And he rode fifty yards and then stopped in a fumble.

With a rush and a crashing Right Royal went over  
With the stride of a stalwart and the blood of a lover,  
He landed on stubble now pushing with clover.

And just as he landed, the March sun shone bright  
And the blue sky showed flamelike and the dun clouds turned  
white;  
The little larks panted aloft their delight,  
Trembling and singing as though one with the light.

And Charles, as he rode, felt the joy of their singing,  
While over the clover the horses went stringing,  
And up from Right Royal the message came winging,  
"It is my day to-day, though the pace may be stinging,  
Though the jumps be all danger and the going all clinging."  
The white, square church-tower with its weather-cock  
swinging

Rose up on the right above grass and dark plough,  
Where the elm trees' black branches had bud on the bough.

Riderless Thankful strode on at his side,  
His bright stirrup-irons flew up at each stride;  
Being free, in this gallop, had filled him with pride.  
Charles thought, "What would come, if he ran out or shied?  
I wish from my heart that the brute would keep wide."  
Coranto drew up on Right Royal's near quarter,  
Beyond lay a hurdle and ditch full of water.

And now as they neared it, Right Royal took heed  
Of the distance to go and the steps he would need;  
He cocked to the effort with eyes bright as gleed,  
Then Coranto's wide wallow shot past him at speed:  
His rider's "Hup, hup, now!" called out quick and cheerly,  
Sent him over in style, but Right Royal jumped early,

Just a second too soon, and from some feet too far,  
Charles learned the mistake as he struck the top bar;  
Then the water flashed skywards, the earth gave a jar,  
And the man on Coranto looked back with "Aha!  
That'll teach you, my son." Then with straining of leather,  
Grey Glory and Monkery landed together.

For a second the stunning kept Charles from his pain,  
Then his sense flooded back, making everything plain  
He was down on the mud, but he still held the rein;  
Right Royal was heaving his haunch from the drain,  
The field was ahead of him, going like rain,

And though the plough held them, they went like the wind  
To the eyes of a man left so badly behind.

Charles climbed to his feet as Right Royal crawled out,  
He said, "That 's extinction beyond any doubt."  
On the plough, on and on, went the rush of the rout.  
Charles mounted and rode, for his courage was stout,  
And he would not give in till the end of the bout,  
But plastered with poachings he rode on forsaken:  
He had lost thirty lengths and his horse had been shaken.

Across the wet ploughland he took a good pull,  
With the thought that the cup of his sorrow was full,  
For the speed of a stag and the strength of a bull  
Could hardly recover the ground he had lost.  
Right Royal went dully, then snorted and tossed,

Tossed his head, with a whicker, went on, and went kind,  
And the horse's great spirit touched Charles in the mind.  
Though his bruise made him dizzy and tears made him blind,  
He would try to the finish, and so they should find.  
He was last, thirty lengths. Here he took in his sails,  
For the field had come crash at the white post and rails.

Here Sir Francis ran out, scaring all who stood near,  
Going crash through the rail like a runaway deer.  
Then the riderless Thankful upset Mutineer,  
Dakkanese in refusing, wheeled round like a top  
Into Culverin's shoulder, which made them both stop.

They reeled from the shock, slithered sideways, and crashed,  
Dakkanese on the guard-rail, which gave, and then smashed.  
As he rolled, the near shoes of the Culverin flashed  
High in air for a moment, bright iron in strain:  
Then he rose with no rider and tripped in his rein.

Right Royal came up as the Dakkanese rose  
All trembling and cowed as though beaten with blows;  
The Culverin stumbled with the reins in his toes;  
On the far side the leap stood the Mutineer grazing,  
His man was a heap which some fellows were raising.

Right Royal strode on, through a second wet plough,  
With the field far ahead (Kubbadar in the bow).  
Charles thought, "Kubbadar's got away from him now.  
Well, it's little to me, for they're so far ahead  
That they'll never come back, though I ride myself dead."

Right Royal bored forward and leaned on his hand,  
"Good boy," said his master. "He must understand.  
You're the one friend I'll have when I've sold all my land.  
God pity my Em as we come past the Stand,  
Last of all, and all muddy; but now for Jim's Pitch."  
Four feet of gorse fence, then a fifteen foot ditch.

And the fifteen foot ditch glittered bright to the brim  
With the brook that ran through it where the grayling did  
swim;  
In the shallows it sparkled, in the deeps it was dim,  
When the race was first run it had nearly drowned Jim,  
And now the bright irons of twenty-four horses  
Were to flicker its ripples with knockings of gorses.

From far in the rear Charles could watch them take hold  
Of their horses and push them across the light mould;  
How their ears all cocked forward, how the drumming hoots  
rolled!  
Kubbadar, far ahead, flew across like a bird,  
Then Soyland, bad second, with Muscatel third.

Then Sir Lopez, and Path Finder, striding alone,  
Then the good horse, Red Ember, the fleabitten roan.  
Then the little Gavotte bearing less than ten stone.  
Then a crowd of all colours with Peterkinooks  
Going strong as a whale goes, head up and out flukes.

And there, as Charles watched, as the shoulders went back,  
The riderless Thankful swerved left off the track,  
Crossing just to the front of the Cimmeroon black.  
Ere the rider could see what his horse was about,  
Cimmeroon swerved, like Thankful, and followed him out.

Across the great grass in the midst of the course  
Cimmeroon ran a match with the riderless horse,  
Then the rider took charge, part by skill, part by force;  
He turned Cimmeroon to re-enter the race  
Seven lengths behind Charles in the post of disgrace.

Beyond the next fence, at the top of a slope,  
Charles saw his field fading and gave up all hope.  
Yet he said, "Any error will knot me my rope.  
I wish that some power would help me to see  
What would give the best chance for Right Royal and me.

Shall I hurry downhill, to catch up when I can?  
Being last is the devil for horse and for man,  
For it makes the horse slack and it makes the man sick.  
Well, I've got to decide and I've got to be quick.

I had better catch up, for if I should be last,  
It would kill my poor Emmy to see me come past.  
I cannot leave Emmy to suffer like that,  
So I'll hurry downhill and then pull on the flat."

So he thought, so he settled, but then, as he stirred,  
Right Royal's ears moved like a vicious man's word;  
So he thought, "If I try it, the horse will refuse."  
So he gave up the project and shook in his shoes.

Then he thought, "Since the horse will not stand interference,  
I must even sit quiet and sink the appearance,  
Since his nerves have been touched, it's as well we're alone."  
He turned down the hill with his heart like a stone.

"But," he cried, "they'll come back, for they've gone such a  
burst  
That they'll all soon be panting, in need to be nursed,  
They will surely come back, but to wait till they do,  
Lord, it's hell to the waiter, it cuts a man through."



Then into his mind came the Avalon case,  
When a man, left at post, without hope of a place,  
First had suffered in patience, then had wormed his way up,  
Then had come with fine judgment, and just won the Cup.

Hoofs thundered behind him, the Cimmeroon caught him,  
His man cursing Thankful and the sire who wrought him.  
"Did you see that brown devil?" he cried as he passed;  
"He carried me out, but I'll never be last.

Just the wrong side the water the brute gave a swerve,  
And he carried me out, half across the course-curve.  
Look, he's cut right across now, we'll meet again.  
Well, I hope someone knocks him and kicks out his brain.

Well, I'll never be last, though I can't win the Cup.  
No sense lolling here, man, you'd better pull up."  
Then he roused Cimmeroon, and was off like a swallow.  
Charles watched, sick at heart, with a longing to follow.

"Better follow," he thought, "for he knows more than I,  
Since he rode here before, and it's wiser to try:  
Would my horse had but wings, would his feet would but  
lift;  
Would we spun on this speedway as wind spins the drift.

There they go out of sight, over fence, to the Turn;  
They are going still harder, they leave me astern.  
They will never come back, I am lost past recall."  
So he cried for a comfort, and only gat gall.

In the glittering branches of the world without end  
Were the spirits, Em's Helper and Charles Cothill's Friend,  
And the Force of Right Royal with a crinier of flame;  
There they breathed the bright glory till the summoning  
came

From the Stand where Em watched, from the field where  
Charles rode,  
From the mud where Right Royal in solitude strode,  
Came the call of three spirits to the spirits that guard,  
Crying, "Up now, and help him, for the danger bears hard."

There they looked, those immortals, from the boughs  
dropping balm,  
But their powers were stirred not, and their grave brows were  
calm,  
For they said, "He 's despairing and the horse is still vexed."  
Charles cleared Channing's Blackthorn and strode to the next.

The next was the Turn in a bogland of rushes;  
There the springs of still water were trampled to slushes;  
The peewits lamented, flapping down, flagging far,  
The riders dared deathwards each trusting his star.

The mud made them slither, the Turn made them close,  
The stirrup steels clinked as they thrust in their toes,  
The brown horse Exception was struck as he rose,  
Struck to earth by the Rocket, then kicked by the grey,  
Then Thunderbolt smote him and rolled him astray.

The man on Exception, Bun Manor, fell clear  
With Monkery's shoes half an inch from his ear,  
A drench of wet mud from the hoofs struck his cheek,  
But the race was gone from him before he could speak.

There Exception and Thunderbolt ended their race,  
Their bright flanks all smeared with the mud of the place;  
In the green fields of Tencombe and the grey downs of  
Churn  
Their names had been glories till they fell at the Turn.

Em prayed in her place that her lover might know  
Not to hurry Right Royal, but let him go slow:  
White-lipped from her praying, she sat, with shut eyes,  
Begging help from her Helper, the deathless, the wise.

From the gold of his branches her Helper took heed,  
He sent forth a thought to help Charles in his need.  
As the white, gleaming gannet eyes fish in the sea,  
So the Thought sought a mortal to bring this to be.

By the side of Exception Bun Manor now stood,  
Sopping rags on a hock that was dripping bright blood.  
He had known Charles of old and defeat made him kind,  
The thought from the Helper came into his mind.

So he cried to Charles Cothill, "Go easy," he cried,  
"Don't hurry; don't worry; sit still and keep wide.  
They flowed like the Severn, they'll ebb like the tide.  
They'll come back and you'll catch them." His voice died  
away.  
In front lay the Dyke, deep as drowning, steel grey

Charles felt his horse see it and stir at the sight.  
Again his heart beat to the dream of the night;  
Once again in his heart's blood the horse seemed to say,  
"I'll die or I'll do it. It's my day to-day."

He saw the grey water in shade from its fence,  
The rows of white faces all staring intense;  
All the heads straining forward, all the shoulders packed  
dense.  
Beyond, he saw Thankful, the riderless brown,  
Snatching grass, dodging capture, with reins hanging down.

Then Thankful stopped eating and cocked up his head,  
He eyed the swift horses that Kubbadar led,  
His eye filled with fire at the roll of their tread;  
Then he tore down the course with a flash of bright shoes,  
As the race's bright herald on fire with news.

As Charles neared the water, the Rocket ran out  
By jumping the railings and kicking a clout  
Of rotten white woodwork to startle the trout.  
When Charles cleared the water, the grass stretched before  
And the glory of going burned in to the core.

Far over his head with a whicker of wings  
Came a wisp of five snipe from a field full of springs;  
The gleam on their feathers went wavering past  
And then some men booed him for being the last.

But last though he was, all his blood was on fire  
With the rush of the wind and the gleam of the mire,  
And the leap of his heart to the skylarks in quire,  
And the feel of his horse going onward, on, on,  
Under sky with white banners and bright sun that shone.

Like a star in the night, like a spring in the waste,  
The image of Emmy rose up as he raced,  
Till his mind was made calm and his spirit was braced.  
For the prize was bright Emmy; his blood beat and beat  
As her beauty made music in that thunder of feet.

The wind was whirled past him, it hummed in his ears,  
Right Royal's excitement had banished his fears,  
For his leap was like singing, his stride was like cheers,  
All his blood was in glory, all his soul was blown bare,  
They were one, blood and purpose, they strode through the  
air.

"What is life if I lose her, what is death if I win?  
At the end of this living the new lives begin.  
Whatever life may be, whatever death is,  
I am spirit eternal, I am this, I am this!"

Girls waved, and men shouted, like flashes, like shots,  
Out of pale blurs of faces whose features were dots;  
Two fences with toppings were cleared without hitch,  
Then they ran for Lost Lady's, a fence and dry ditch.

Here Monkery's rider, on seeing a chance,  
Shot out beyond Soyland to lead the advance.  
Then he steadied and summed up his field with a glance.  
All crossed the Lost Lady's, that dry ditch of fear,  
Then a roar broke about them, the race-course was near.

Right and left were the swing-boats and merry-go-rounds,  
Yellow varnish that wavered, machines making sounds,  
Shots cracking like cork-pops, fifes whining with steam,  
"All hot," from a picman; all blurred as in dream;

Then the motors, then cheering, then the brass of a band,  
Then the white rails all crowded with a mob on each hand.  
Then they swerved to the left over gorse-bush and hurdle  
And they rushed for the Water, where a man's blood might  
curdle.

Charles entered the race-course and prayed in his mind  
That love for the moment might make Emmy blind,  
Not see him come past half a distance behind:  
For an instant he thought, "I must shove on ahead,  
For to pass her like this, Lord, I'd rather be dead."

Then, in crossing the hurdle, the Stand arose plain,  
All the flags, horns and cheers beat like blows on his brain,  
And he thought, "Time to race when I come here again,  
If I once lose my head, I'll be lost past appeal."  
All the crowd flickered past, like a film on a reel,

Like a ribbon, whirled past him, all painted with eyes.  
All the real, as he rode, was the horse at his thighs,  
And the thought, "They'll come back, if I've luck, if I'm  
wise."  
Some banners uncrumpled on the blue of the skies,  
The cheers became frantic, the blur of men shook,  
As Thankful and Kubbadar went at the brook.

Neck and neck, stride for stride, they increased as they neared  
it,  
Though the danger gleamed greyly, they galloped to beard it;  
And Kubbadar dwelt on his jump as he cleared it,  
While Thankful went on with a half a length lead.  
Charles thought, "Kubbadar, there, is going to seed."

Then Monkery took it, then Soyland, then two,  
 Muscatel and Sir Lopez, who leaped not but flew,  
 Like a pair of June swallows going over the dew,  
 Like a flight of bright fishes from a field of seas blue,  
 Like a wisp of snipe wavering in the dusk out of view.  
 Then Red Ember, Path Finder, Gavotte and Coranto,  
 Then The Ghost going level by Syringa a-taunto.

Then Peterkinooks, then the Cimmeroon black,  
 Who had gone to his horses, not let them come back;  
 Then Stormalong rousing, then the Blowbury crack,  
 Counter-Vair, going grandly beside Cross-Molin,  
 All charged the bright brook and Coranto went in.

Natuna, Grey Glory and Hadrian followed,  
 Flying clear of the water where Coranto now wallowed;  
 Cannonade leaped so big that the lookers-on holloed.  
 Ere the splash from Coranto was bright on the grass,  
 The face of the water had seen them all pass.

But Coranto half scrambled, then slipped on his side,  
 Then churned in the mud till the brook was all dyed;  
 As Charles reached the water Coranto's man cried,  
 "Put him at it like blazes and give him a switch;  
 Jump big, man, for God's sake, I'm down in the ditch."

Right Royal went at it and streamed like a comet,  
 And the next thing Charles knew, he was twenty yards from  
 it;  
 And he thought about Em as he rushed past her place,  
 With a prayer for God's peace on her beautiful face.

Then he tried to keep steady. "Oh, steady," he said,  
 "I'm riding with judgment, not leading a raid,  
 And I'm getting excited, and there's Cannonade.  
 What's the matter?" he shouted as Royal swept past.  
 "Sprained!" shouted the man, "over-jumped, at the last."  
 "Rough luck," shouted Charles. Then the crowd dropped  
 away,  
 Then the sun shone behind him, the bright turned to grey;

They were round, the first time, they were streaming away  
For the second time round. There the starting-post shone.  
Then they swung round the curve and went galloping on.

All the noise died behind, Fate was waiting in front,  
Now the racing began, they had done with the hunt.  
With the sunlight behind him Charles saw how they went;  
No nearer, but further, and only one spent.

Only Kubbadar dwelling, the rest going strong,  
Taking jump after jump as a bird takes a song,  
Their thirty lengths' lead seemed a weary way long,  
It seemed to grow longer, it seemed to increase:  
"This is bitter," he said. "May it be for my peace.

My dream was a glimpse of the world beyond sense,  
All beauty and wisdom are messages thence.  
There the difference of bodies and the strain of control  
Are removed; beast with man speaks, and spirit with soul.

My vision was Wisdom, or the World as it Is.  
Fate rules us, not Wisdom, whose ways are not his,  
Fate, weaponed with all things, has willed that I fall;  
So be it, Fate orders, and we go to the wall.

Go down to the beaten, who have come to the truth  
That is deeper than sorrow and stronger than youth,  
That is God, the foundation, who sees and is just  
To the beauty within us who are nothing but dust.

Yet, Royal, my comrade, before Fate decides,  
His hand stays, uncertain, like the sea between tides,  
Then a man has a moment, if he strike not too late,  
When his soul shakes the world-soul, and can even change  
Fate.

So you and I, Royal, before we give in,  
Will spend blood and soul in our effort to win,  
And if all be proved vain when our effort is sped,  
May the hoofs of our conquerors trample us dead."

Then the soul of Right Royal thrilled up through each hand,  
"We are one, for this gallop; we both understand.  
If my lungs give me breathing, if my loins stand the strain,  
You may lash me to strips and it shan't be in vain.

For to-day, in this hour, my Power will come  
From my Past to my Present (and a Spirit gives some).  
We have gone many gallops, we two, in the past,  
When I go with my Power you will know me at last.

You remember the morning when the red leaf hung still,  
When they found in the beech-clump on Lollington Hill,  
When we led past the Sheep Fold and along the Fair Mile?  
When I go with my Power, that will not seem worth while.

Then the day in the valley when we found in the wood,  
When we led all the gallop to the river in flood,  
And the sun burst out shining as the fox took the stream;  
When I go with my Power, that will all seem a dream.

Then the day on the Downland when we went like the light  
From the spring by Hurst Compton till the Clump was in  
sight,  
Till we killed by The Romans, where Blowbury is;  
All the best of that gallop shall be nothing to this.

If I failed in the past, with my Power away,  
I was only my shadow, it was not my day,  
So I sulked like my sire, or shrank, like my dam;  
Now I come to my Power you will know what I am.

I've the strength, you've the brain, we are running as one,  
And nothing on earth can be lost till it's won.  
If I live to the end naught shall put you to shame."  
So he thrilled, going flame-like, with a crinier of flame.



"Yet," he thrilled, "it may be, that before the end come  
Death will touch me, the Changer, and carry me home.  
For we know not, O master, when our life shall have rest,  
But the Life is near change that has uttered its best.  
If we grow like the grasses, we fall like the flower,  
And I know, I touch Death when I come to my Power."

Now over the course flew invisible birds,  
All the wants of the watchers, all the thoughts and winged  
words,  
Swift as floatings of fire from a bonfire's crest  
When they burn leaves on Kimble and the fire streams west,

Bright an instant, then dying, but renewed and renewed,  
So the thoughts chased the racers like hounds that pursued,  
Bringing cheer to their darlings, bringing curse to their foes,  
Searching into men's spirits till their Powers arose.

Red and rigid the Powers of the riding men were,  
And as seabirds on Ailsa, in the nesting time there,  
Rise like leaves in a whirlwind and float like leaves blown,  
So the wants chased the riders and fought for their own.

Unseen by the riders, from the myriad tense brains  
Came the living thoughts flying to clutch at men's reins,  
Clearing paths for their darlings by running in cry  
At the heads of their rivals till the darlings gat by,

As in football, when forwards heave all in a pack,  
With their arms round each other and their heels heeling back,  
And their bodies all straining, as they heave, and men fall,  
And the halves hover hawklike to pounce on the ball,

And the runners poise ready, while the mass of hot men  
Heaves and slips, like rough bullocks making play in a pen,  
And the crowd sees the heaving, and is still, till it break,  
So the riders endeavoured as they strained for the stake.

They skimmed through the grassland, they came to the  
plough,  
The wind rushed behind them like the waves from a prow,  
The clods rose behind them with speckles of gold  
From the iron-cruched coltsfoot flung up from the mould.

All green was the plough with the thrusts of young corn,  
Pools gleamed in the ruts that the cart-wheels had worn,  
And Kubbadar's man wished he had not been born.  
Natuna was weary and dwelt on her stride,  
Grey Glory's grey tail rolled about, side to side.

Then swish, came a shower, from a driving grey cloud,  
Though the blue sky shone brightly and the larks sang aloud  
As the squall of rain pelted, the coloured caps bowed,  
With Thankful still leading and Monkery close,  
The hoofs smacked the clayland, the flying clods rose.

They slowed on the clayland, the rain pelted by,  
The end of a rainbow gleamed out in the sky;  
Natuna dropped back till Charles heard her complain,  
Grey Glory's forequarters seemed hung on his rein,  
Cimmeroon clearly was feeling the strain.  
But the little Gavotte skimmed the clay like a witch,  
Charles saw her coquet as she went at Jim's Pitch.

They went at Jim's Pitch, through the deeply dug gaps  
Where the hoofs of great horses had kicked off the scraps,  
And there at the water they met with mishaps,  
For Natuna stopped dead and Grey Glory went in,  
And a cannon on landing upset Cross-Molin.

As swallows bound northward when apple-bloom blows,  
See laggards drop spent from their flight as it goes,  
Yet can pause not in Heaven as they scythe the thin air  
But go on to the house-eaves and the nests clinging bare,  
So Charles flashed beyond them, those three men the less  
Who had gone to get glory and met with distress.

He rode to the rise-top, and saw, down the slope,  
The race far ahead at a steady strong lope  
Going over the grassland, too well for his peace,  
They were steady as oxen and strong as wild geese.

As a man by a cornfield on a windy wild day  
Sees the corn bow in shadows ever hurrying away,  
And wonders, in watching, when the light with bright feet  
Will harry those shadows from the ears of the wheat,  
So Charles, as he watched, wondered when the bright face  
Of the finish would blaze on that smouldering race.

On the last of the grass, ere the going was dead,  
Counter-Vair's man shot out with his horse by the head,  
Like a partridge put up from the stubble he sped,  
He dropped Kubbadar and he flew by Red Ember  
Up to Monkery's girth like a leaf in November.

Then Stormalong followed, and went to the front,  
And just as the find puts a flame to a hunt,  
So the rush of those horses put flame to the race.  
Charles saw them all shaken to quickening pace.

And Monkery moved, not to let them go by,  
And the steadiest rider made ready to fly;  
Well into the wet land they leaped from the dry,  
They scattered the rain-pools that mirrored the sky,  
They crushed down the rushes that pushed from the plough.  
And Charles longed to follow, but muttered "Not now."

"Not now," so he thought, "yet if not" (he said) "when  
Shall I come to those horses and scupper their men?  
Will they never come back? Shall I never get up?"  
So he drank bitter gall from a very cold cup.

But he nursed his horse gently and prayed for the best,  
And he caught Cimmeroon, who was sadly distressed,

And he passed Cimmeroon, with the thought that the black  
Was as nearly dead beat as the man on his back.  
Then he gained on his field who were galled by the churn,  
The plough searched them out as they came to the Turn.  
But Gavotte, black and coral, went strong as a spate;  
Charles thought, "She's a flier and she carries no weight."

And now, beyond question, the field began tailing,  
For all had been tested and many were ailing,  
The riders were weary, the horses were failing,  
The blur of bright colours rolled over the railing,  
With the grunts of urged horses, and the oaths of hot men,  
"Gerr on, you," "Come on, now," agen and agen;  
They spattered the mud on the willow tree's bole  
And they charged at the danger; and the danger took toll.

For Monkery landed, but dwelt on the fence,  
So that Counter-Vair passed him in galloping thence.  
Then Stormalong blundered, then bright Muscatel  
Slipped badly on landing and stumbled and fell,  
'Then rose in the morrish, with his man on his neck  
Like a nearly dead sailor afloat on a wreck,  
With his whip in the mud and his stirrups both gone,  
Yet he kept in the saddle and made him go on.

As Charles leaped the Turn, all the field was tailed out  
Like petals of roses that wind blows about,  
Like petals of colour blown back and brought near,  
Like poppies in wind-flaws when corn is in ear;  
Fate held them or sped them, the race was beginning.  
Charles said, "I must ride, or I've no chance of winning."

So gently he quickened, yet making no call;  
Right Royal replied as though knowing it all.  
He passed Kubbadar, who was ready to fall,  
Then he strode up to Hadrian, up to his girth,  
They eyed the Dyke's glitter and picked out a berth.

Now the race reached the water and over it flew  
In a sweep of great muscle strained taut and guyed true.  
There Muscatel floundered and came to a halt,  
Muscatel, the bay chaser without any fault.

Right Royal's head lifted, Right Royal took charge,  
On the left near the railings, ears cocked, going large,  
Leaving Hadrian behind as a yacht leaves a barge.  
Though Hadrian's rider called something unheard,  
He was past him at speed like the albatross bird,  
Running up to Path Finder, they leaped, side by side,  
And the foam from Path Finder flecked white on his hide.

And on landing, he lifted, while Path Finder dwelt,  
And his noble eye brightened from the glory he felt,  
And the mud flung behind him flicked Path Finder's chest,  
As he left him behind and went on to the rest.

Charles cast a glance back, but he could not divine  
Why the man on Path Finder should make him a sign,  
Nor why Hadrian's rider should shout, and then point,  
With his head nodded forward and a jerked elbow joint.

But he looked as he pointed, both forward and down,  
And he saw that Right Royal was smeared like a clown,  
Smeared red and bespattered with flecks of bright blood,  
From a blood-vessel burst, as he well understood.

And just as he saw it, Right Royal went strange  
As one whom Death's finger has touched to a change;  
He went with a stagger that sickened the soul,  
As a force stricken feeble and out of control.

Charles thought, "He is dying, and this is the end,  
I am losing my Emmy and killing my friend;  
He was hurt when we fell, as I thought at the first,  
And I've forced him three miles with a blood-vessel burst!

And his game heart went on." Here a rush close behind  
Made him cast a glance back with despair in his mind.  
It was Cimmeroon rushing, his lips twitched apart,  
His eyes rolled back sightless, and death in his heart.  
He reached to Right Royal, then fell, and was dead,  
Nevermore to stretch reins with his beautiful head.

A gush of bright blood filled his mouth as he sank,  
And he reached out his hoofs to the heave of his flank,  
And Charles, leaning forward, made certain, and cried,  
"This is Cimmeroon's blood, blown in passing beside,  
And Roy's going strangely was just that he felt  
Death coming behind him, or blood that he smelt."

So Charles's heart lightened and Royal went steady  
As a water bound seaward set free from an eddy,  
As a water sucked downward to leap at a weir  
Sucked swifter and swifter till it shoot like a spear.

There, a mile on ahead, was the Stand like a cliff,  
Grey wood, packed with faces, under banners blown stiff.  
Where, in two minutes more, they would cheer for him—if—  
If he came to those horses still twelve lengths ahead.  
"O Royal, you do it, or kill me!" he said.

They went at the hurdle as though it weren't there,  
White splinters of hurdle flew up in the air,  
And down, like a rabbit, went Syringa the mare;  
Her man somersaulted right under Gavotte,  
And Syringa went on but her rider did not.

But the little Gavotte tucked her feet away clear,  
Just an inch to one side of the fallen man's ear,  
With a flash of horse wisdom as she went on the wing  
Not to tread on man's body, that marvellous thing.

As in mill-streams in summer the dark water drifts  
Petals mown in the hayfield skimmed over by swifts,  
Petals blue from the speedwell or sweet from the lime,  
And the fish rise to test them, as they float, for a time,  
Yet they all loiter sluicewards and are whirled and then  
drowned,  
So the race swept the horses till they glimmered the ground.

Charles looked at those horses, and speedily guessed  
That the roan horse, Red Ember, was one of the best;  
He was level and easy, not turning a hair,  
But with power all ready when his rider should care,

And he leaped like a lover and his coat still did shine.  
Charles thought, "He 's a wonder, and he 's twelve lengths  
from mine."

There were others still in it, according to looks:  
Sir Lopez, and Soyland, and Peterkinooks,  
Counter-Vair and Gavotte, all with plenty to spend;  
Then Monkery worn, and The Ghost at his end.  
But the roan horse, Red Ember, seemed playing a game.  
Charles thought, "He 's the winner; he can run us all tame."  
The wind brought a tune and a faint noise of cheers,  
Right Royal coquetted and cocked up his ears.

Charles saw his horse gaining; the going increased;  
His touch on the mouth felt the soul of the beast,  
And the heave of each muscle and the look of his eye  
Said, "I'll come to those horses, and pass them, or die."

Like a thing in a dream the grey buildings drew nearer,  
The babble rose louder and the organ's whine clearer,  
The hurdle came closer, he rushed through its top  
Like a comet in heaven that nothing can stop.

Then they strode the green grass for the Lost Lady's grave,  
And Charles felt Right Royal rise up like a wave,  
Like a wave far to seaward that lifts in a line  
And advances to shoreward in a slipping incline,

And climbs, and comes toppling, and advances in glory,  
Mounting inwards, marching onwards, with his shoulders all  
hoary,  
Sweeping shorewards with a shouting to burst on the sand,  
So Right Royal sent meaning through the rein in each hand.

Charles felt like a captain whose ship has long chased  
Some ship better handled, better manned, better placed,  
And has all day beheld her, that ship of his dream,  
Bowing swanlike beyond him up a blue hill of gleam,

Yet, at dark, the wind rising makes his rival strike sail  
While his own ship crowds canvas and comes within hail;  
Till he see her, his rival, snouting into the grey,  
Like a sea-rock in winter that stands and breaks spray,  
And by lamplight goes past her in a roaring of song  
Shouting, "Let fall your royals: stretch the halliards along!"

Now The Ghost dropped behind him, now his horses drew close.

Charles watched them, in praying, while his hopes rose and rose,

"O God, give me patience, give me luck, give me skill,  
For he's going so grandly I think that he will."

They went at Lost Lady's like Severn at flood,  
With an urging of horses and a squelching of mud:  
By the hot flanks of horses the toppings were bruised,  
And Syringa the manless swerved right and refused,

Swerved right on a sudden, as none could expect,  
Straight into Right Royal, who slithered and pecked,  
Though Charles held him up and got safely across,  
He was round his nag's neck within touch of a toss.

He gat to his saddle, he never knew how;  
What hope he had had was knocked out of him now,  
But his courage came back as his terror declined,  
He spoke to Right Royal and made up his mind.  
He judged the lengths lost and the chance that remained,  
And he followed his field, and he gained, and he gained.

He watched them, those horses, so splendid, so swift,  
Whirled down the green roadway like leaves in the lift:  
Now he measured their mettle, and said with a moan,  
"They can beat me, Lord help me, though they give me a stone.

Red Ember's a wonder, and Soyland's the same,  
And Gavotte there's a beauty, and she goes like a flame;  
But Peterkinooks, that I used to despise,  
Is the horse that must win if his looks are not lies."



Their bright colours flitted, as at dusk in Brazil  
Bright birds reach the tree-tops when the land wind falls still,  
When the sky is all scarlet on the tops of the treen  
Comes a whirl of birds flying, blue and orange and green.

As a whirl of notes running in a fugue that men play,  
And the thundering follows as the pipe flits away,  
And the laughter comes after and the hautboys begin,  
So they ran at the hurdle and scattered the whin.  
As they leaped to the race-course the sun burst from cloud,  
And like tumult in dream came the roar of the crowd.

For to right and to left, now, were crowded men yelling  
And a great cry boomed backward like muffled bells knelling,  
And a surge of men running seemed to follow the race,  
The horses all trembled and quickened their pace.

As the porpoise, grown weary of his rush through the dim  
Of the unlitten silence where the swiftresses swim,  
Learns at sudden the tumult of a clipper bound home  
And exults with this playmate and leaps in her foam,

Or as nightingales coming into England in May,  
Coming songless at sunset, being worn with the way,  
Settle spent in the twilight, drooping head under wing,  
Yet are glad when the dark comes, while at moonrise they  
sing;

Or as fire on a hillside, by happy boys kindled,  
That has burnt black a heath-tuft, scorched a bramble, and  
dwindled,  
Blown by wind yet arises in a wave of flogged flame,  
So the souls of those horses to the testing time came.

Now they closed on their leaders, and the running increased,  
They rushed down the arc curving round to the east;  
All the air rang with roaring, all the peopled loud stands  
Roared aloud from tense faces, shook with hats and waved  
hands.

So they cleared the green gorse-bush by bursting it through,  
There was no time for thinking, there was scarce time to  
do.

Charles gritted his spirit as he charged through the gorse:  
"You must just grin and suffer: sit still on your horse."

There in front was a hurdle and the Distance Post white,  
And the long, green, broad Straight washed with wind and  
blown bright;  
Now the roaring had screaming, bringing names to their  
ears:

"Come, Soyland!" "Sir Lopez!" Then cat-calls; then cheers.

"Sir Lopez! Sir Lopez!" then the jiggling brass laughter  
From the yellow tossed swing-boats swooping rafter to rafter.  
Then the blare of all organs, then the roar of all throats,  
And they shot past the side shows, the horses and boats.

Now the Wants of the Watchers whirled into the race  
Like flames in their fury, like men in the face,  
Mad-red from the Wanting that made them alive,  
They fought with those horses or helped them to strive.

Like leaves blown on Hudson when maples turn gold,  
They whirled in their colour, they clutched to catch hold,  
They sang to the riders, they smote at their hearts  
Like flakes of live fire, like castings of darts.

As a snow in Wisconsin when the darkness comes down,  
Running white on the prairie, making all the air brown,  
Blinding men with the hurry of its millions of feet,  
So the Wants pelted on them, so they blinded and beat.

And like spirits calm shining upon horses of flame,  
Came the Friends of those riders to shield them from shame,  
White as fire white-burning, rushing each by his friend,  
Singing songs of the glory of the world without end;

And as men in Wisconsin driving cars in the snow  
Butt against its impulsion and face to the blow,  
Tossing snow from their bonnets as a ship tosses foam,  
So the Friends tossed the Wantings as they brought their  
friends home.

Now they charged the last hurdle that led to the Straight,  
Charles longing to ride, though his spirit said "Wait."  
He came to his horses as they came to the leap,  
Eight hard-driven horses, eight men breathing deep.

On the left, as he leaped it, a flashing of brown  
Kicking white on the grass, showed that Thankful was down;  
Then a glance, right and left, showed that, barring all flukes,  
It was Soyland's, Sir Lopez', or Peterkinooks'.

For Stormalong blundered and dwelt as he landed,  
Counter-Vair's man was beaten and Monkery stranded.  
As he reached to Red Ember the man on the red  
Cried, "Lord, Charlie Cothill, I thought you were dead!"

He passed the Red Ember, he came to the flank  
Of Peterkinooks, whom he reached and then sank.  
There were only two others, going level alone,  
First the spotted cream jacket, then the blue, white and roan.

Up the street of green race-course they strained for the prize,  
While the stands blurred with waving and the air shook with  
cries:

"Now, Sir Lopez!" "Come, Soyland!" "Now, Sir Lopez!  
Now, now!"

Then Charles judged his second, but he could not tell how.

But a glory of sureness leaped from horse into man,  
And the man said, "Now, beauty," and the horse said, "I  
can."

And the long weary Royal made an effort the more,  
Though his heart thumped like drum-beats as he went to the  
fore.

Neck and neck went Sir Lopez and Soyland together,  
Soyland first, a short head, with his neck all in lather;  
Both were ridden their hardest, both were doing their best,  
Right Royal reached Soyland and came to his chest.

There Soyland's man saw him with the heel of his eye,  
A horse with an effort that could beat him or tie;  
Then he glanced at Sir Lopez, and he bit through his lip  
And he drove in his spurs and he took up his whip.

There he lashed the game Soyland who had given his all,  
And he gave three strides more, and then failed at the call,  
And he dropped behind Royal like a leaf in a tide:  
Then Sir Lopez and Royal ran on side by side.

There they looked at each other, and they rode, and were  
grim;  
Charles thought, "That 's Sir Lopez. I shall never beat him."  
All the yells for Sir Lopez seemed to darken the air,  
They were rushing past Emmy and the White Post was  
there.

He drew to Sir Lopez; but Sir Lopez drew clear;  
Right Royal clung to him and crept to his ear.  
Then the man on Sir Lopez judged the moment had come  
For the last ounce of effort that would bring his horse home.

So he picked up his whip for three swift slashing blows,  
And Sir Lopez drew clear, but Right Royal stuck close.  
Charles sat still as stone, for he dared not to stir,  
There was that in Right Royal that needed no spur.

In the trembling of an instant power leaped up within,  
Royal's pride of high spirit not to let the bay win.  
Up he went, past his withers, past his neck, to his head.  
With Sir Lopez' man lashing, Charles still, seeing red.

So they rushed for one second, then Sir Lopez shot out:  
Charles thought, "There, he 's done me, without any doubt.  
Oh, come now, Right Royal!"

And Sir Lopez changed feet  
And his ears went back level; Sir Lopez was beat.

Right Royal went past him, half an inch, half a head,  
Half a neck, he was leading, for an instant he led;  
Then a hooped black and coral flew up like a shot,  
With a lightning-like effort from little Gavotte.

The little bright mare, made of nerves and steel springs,  
Shot level beside him, shot ahead as with wings.  
Charles felt his horse quicken, felt the desperate beat  
Of the blood in his body from his knees to his feet.

Three terrible strides brought him up to the mare,  
Then they rushed to wild shouting through a whirl of blown  
air;  
Then Gavotte died to nothing; Soyland came once again  
Till his muzzle just reached to the knot on his rein.

Then a whirl of urged horses thundered up, whipped and  
blown,  
Soyland, Peterkinooks, and Red Ember the roan.  
For an instant they challenged, then they drooped and were  
done;  
Then the White Post shot backwards, Right Royal had won.

Won a half length from Soyland, Red Ember close third;  
Fourth, Peterkinooks; fifth, Gavotte, harshly spurred;  
Sixth, Sir Lopez, whose rider said "Just at the Straight  
He swerved at the hurdle and twisted a plate."

Then the numbers went up; then John Harding appeared  
To lead in the Winner while the bookmakers cheered.  
Then the riders weighed-in, and the meeting was over,  
And bright Emmy Crowthorne could go with her lover.

For the bets on Right Royal which Cothill had made  
The taker defaulted, they never were paid;  
The taker went West, whence he sent Charles's bride  
Silver bit-cups and beadwork on antelope hide.

Charles married his lady, but he rode no more races;  
He lives on the Downland on the blown grassy places,  
Where he and Right Royal can canter for hours  
On the flock-bitten turf full of tiny blue flowers.

There the Roman pitched camp, there the Saxon kept sheep,  
There he lives out this Living that no man can keep,  
That is manful but a moment before it must pass,  
Like the stars sweeping westward, like the wind on the grass.



KING COLE





## KING COLE

**K**ING COLE was King before the troubles came,  
The land was happy while he held the helm,  
The valley-land from Condicote to Thame,  
Watered by Thames and green with many an elm.  
For many a year he governed well his realm,  
So well-beloved, that, when at last he died,  
It was bereavement to the countryside.

So good, so well-beloved, had he been  
In life, that when he reached the judging-place  
(There where the scales are even, the sword keen),  
The Acquitting Judges granted him a grace,  
Aught he might choose, red, black, from king to ace,  
Beneath the bright arch of the heaven's span;  
He chose, to wander earth, the friend of man.

So, since that time, he wanders shore and shire  
An old, poor, wandering man, with glittering eyes,  
Helping distressful folk to their desire  
By power of spirit that within him lies.  
Gentle he is, and quiet, and most wise,  
He wears a ragged grey, he sings sweet words,  
And where he walks there flutter little birds.

And when the planets glow as dusk begins  
He pipes a wooden flute to music old.  
Men hear him on the downs, in lonely inns,  
In valley woods, or up the Chiltern wold;  
His piping feeds the starved and warms the cold,  
It gives the beaten courage; to the lost  
It brings back faith, that lodestar of the ghost.

And most he haunts the beech-tree-pasturing chalk,  
The Downs and Chilterns with the Thames between.  
There still the Berkshire shepherds see him walk,  
Searching the unhelped woe with instinct keen,  
His old hat stuck with never-withering green,  
His flute in poke, and little singings sweet  
Coming from birds that flutter at his feet.

Not long ago a circus wandered there,  
Where good King Cole most haunts the public way,  
Coming from Reading for St. Giles's Fair  
Through rain unceasing since Augustine's Day;  
The horses spent, the waggons splashed with clay,  
The men with heads bowed to the wester roaring,  
Heaving the van-wheels up the hill at Goring.

Wearily plodding up the hill they went,  
Broken by bitter weather and the luck,  
Six vans, and one long waggon with the tent,  
And piebald horses following in the muck,  
Dragging their tired hooves out with a suck,  
And heaving on, like some defeated tribe  
Bound for Despair with Death upon their kibe.

All through the morn the circus floundered thus,  
The nooning found them at the Crossing Roads,  
Stopped by an axle splitting in its truss.  
The horses drooped and stared before their loads,  
Dark with the wet they were, and cold as toads,  
The men were busy with the foundered van,  
The showman stood apart, a beaten man.

He did not heed the dripping of the rain,  
Nor the wood's roaring, nor the blotted hill,  
He stood apart and bit upon his pain,  
Biting the bitter meal with bitter will.  
Focussed upon himself, he stood, stock still,  
Staring unseeing, while his mind repeated,  
"This is the end; I'm ruined; I'm defeated."

From time to time a haggard woman's face  
Peered at him from a van, and then withdrew;  
Seeds from the hayrack blew about the place,  
The smoke out of the waggon chimneys blew,  
From wicker creel the skinny cockerel crew.  
The men who set the foundered axle straight  
Glanced at their chief, and each man nudged his mate.

And one, the second clown, a snub-nosed youth,  
Fair-haired, with broken teeth, discoloured black,  
Muttered, "He looks a treat, and that 's the truth.  
I've had enough: I've given him the sack."  
He took his wrench, arose, and stretched his back,  
Swore at a piebald pony trying to bite,  
And rolled a cigarette and begged a light.

Within, the second's wife, who leaped the hoops,  
Nursed sour twins, her son and jealousy,  
Thinking of love, in luckier, happier troupes  
Known on the roads in summers now gone by  
Before her husband had a roving eye,  
Before the rat-eyed baggage with red hair  
Came to do tight rope and make trouble there.

Beside the vans, the clown, old Circus John,  
Growled to the juggler as he sucked his briar,  
"How all the marrow of a show was gone  
Since women came, to sing and walk the wire,  
Killing the clown his act for half his hire,  
Killing the circus trade: because," said he,  
"Horses and us are what men want to see."

The juggler was a young man shaven-clean,  
Even in the mud his dainty way he had,  
Red-cheeked, with eyes like boxer's, quick and keen,  
A jockey-looking youth with legs besprad,  
Humming in baritone a ditty sad,  
And tapping on his teeth his finger-nails,  
The while the clown sucked pipe and spat his tales.

Molly, the singer, watched him wearily  
 With big black eyes that love had brimmed with tears,  
 Her mop of short cut hair was blown awry,  
 Her firm mouth showed her wiser than her years.  
 She stroked a piebald horse and pulled his ears,  
 And kissed his muzzle, while her eyes betrayed  
 This, that she loved the juggler, not the jade.

And growling in a group the music stood  
 Sucking short pipes, their backs against the rain,  
 Plotting rebellion in a bitter mood,  
 "A shilling more, or never play again."  
 Their old great coats were foul with many a stain,  
 Weather and living rough had stamped their faces,  
 They were cast clerks, old sailors, old hard cases.

Within the cowboy's van the rat-eyed wife,  
 Her reddish hair in papers twisted close,  
 Turned wet potatoes round against the knife,  
 And in a bucket dropped the peelèd Oes.  
 Her little girl was howling from her blows,  
 The cowboy smoked, and with a spanner whacked  
 The metal target of his shooting act.

And in another van more children cried  
 From being beaten or for being chid  
 By fathers cross or mothers haggard-eyed,  
 Made savage by the fortunes that betid.  
 The rain dripped from the waggons: the drops glid  
 Along the pony's flanks; the thick boots stamped  
 The running muck for warmth, and hope was damped.

Yet all of that small troupe in misery stuck,  
 Were there by virtue of their nature's choosing  
 To be themselves and take the season's luck,  
 Counting the being artists worth the bruising.  
 To be themselves, as artists, even if losing  
 Wealth, comfort, health, in doing as they chose,  
 Alone of all life's ways brought peace to those.

So there below the forlorn woods, they grumbled,  
Stamping for warmth and shaking off the rain.  
Under the foundered van the tinkers fumbled,  
Fishing the splitted truss with wedge and chain.  
Soon, all was done, the van could go again,  
Men cracked their whips, the horses' shoulders forged  
Up to the collar while the mud disgorged.

So with a jangling of their chains they went,  
Lean horses, swaying vans and creaking wheels,  
Bright raindrops tilting off the van roof pent  
And reedy cockerels crying in the creels,  
Smoke driving down, men's shouts and children's squeals,  
Whips cracking, and the hayrack sheddings blowing;  
The showman stood aside to watch them going.

What with the rain and misery making mad,  
The showman never saw a stranger come  
Till there he stood, a stranger roughly clad  
In ragged grey of woollen spun at home.  
Green sprigs were in his hat, and other some  
Stuck in his coat; he bore a wooden flute,  
And redbreasts hopped and carolled at his foot.

It was King Cole, who smiled and spoke to him.

KING COLE. The van will hold until you reach a wright.  
Where do you play?

THE SHOWMAN. In Wallingford to-night.

KING COLE. There are great doings there.

THE SHOWMAN. I know of none.

KING COLE. The Prince will lay the Hall's foundation stone  
This afternoon: he and the Queen are there.

THE SHOWMAN. Lord, keep this showman patient, lest he  
swear.

KING COLE. Why should you swear? Be glad; your town is  
filled.

THE SHOWMAN. What use are crowds to me with business  
killed?

KING COLE. I see no cause for business to be crossed.

THE SHOWMAN. Counter-attractions man at public cost.

Fireworks, dancing, bonfires, soldiers, speeches.  
 In all my tour along the river's reaches  
 I've had ill-luck: I've clashed with public feasts.  
 At Wycombe fair, we met performing beasts,  
 At Henley, waxworks, and at Maidenhead  
 The Psyche woman talking with the dead.  
 At Bray, we met the rain, at Reading, flood,  
 At Pangbourne, politics, at Goring, mud,  
 Now here, at Wallingford, the Royal Pair.  
 Counter-attraction killing everywhere,  
 Killing a circus dead: God give me peace;  
 If this be living, death will be release.  
 By God, it brims the cup; it fills the can.  
 What trade are you?

KING COLE. I am a wandering man.

THE SHOWMAN. You mean, a tramp who flutes for bread and pence?

KING COLE. I come, and flute, and then I wander thence.

THE SHOWMAN. Quicksilver Tom who couldn't keep his place.

KING COLE. My race being run, I love to watch the race.

THE SHOWMAN. You ought to seek your rest.

KING COLE. My rest is this,  
 The world of men, wherever trouble is.

THE SHOWMAN. If trouble rest you, God! your life is rest.

KING COLE. Even the sun keeps moving, east to west.

THE SHOWMAN. Little he gets by moving; less than I.

KING COLE. He sees the great green world go floating by.

THE SHOWMAN. A sorry sight to see, when all is said.

Why don't you set to work?

KING COLE. I have no trade.

THE SHOWMAN. Where is your home?

KING COLE. All gone, a long time past.

THE SHOWMAN. Your children, then?

KING COLE. All dead, sir, even the last.

I am a lonely man; no kith nor kin.

THE SHOWMAN. There is no joy in life when deaths begin,

I know it, I. How long is 't since you ate?

KING COLE. It was so long ago that I forget.

THE SHOWMAN. The proverb says a man can always find  
One sorrier than himself in state and mind.  
'Fore George, it 's true. Well, come, then, to the van.  
Jane, can you find a meal for this poor man?

"Yes," said his wife. "Thank God, we still are able  
To help a friend; come in, and sit to table."  
"Come," said her man, "I'll help you up aboard,  
I'll save your legs as far as Wallingford."

They climbed aboard and sat; the woman spread  
Food for King Cole, and watched him as he fed.  
Tears trickled down her cheeks and much she sighed.  
"My son," she said, "like you, is wandering wide,  
I know not where; a beggar on the street  
(For all I know), without a crust to eat,  
He never could abide the circus life."

THE SHOWMAN. It was my fault, I always tell my wife  
I put too great constraint upon his will;  
Things would be changed if he were with us still.  
I ought not to have forced him to the trade.  
KING COLE. "A forced thing finds a vent," my father said;  
And yet a quickening tells me that your son  
Is not far from you now; for I am one  
Who feels these things, like comfort in the heart.

The couple watched King Cole and shrank apart,  
For brightness covered him with glittering.  
"Tell me your present troubles," said the King,  
"For you are worn. What sorrow makes you sad?"

THE SHOWMAN. Why, nothing, sir, except that times are  
bad,  
Rain all the season through, and empty tents,  
And nothing earned for stock or winter rents.  
My wife there, ill, poor soul, from very grief,  
And now no hope nor prospect of relief;  
The season 's done, and we're as we began.



Now one can bear one's troubles, being a man,  
 But what I cannot bear is loss of friends.  
 This troupe will scatter when the season ends:  
 My clown is going, and the Tricksey Three,  
 Who juggle and do turns, have split with me;  
 And now, to-day, my wife's too ill to dance,  
 And all my music ask for an advance.  
 There must be poison in a man's distress  
 That makes him mad and people like him less.

Well, men are men. But what I cannot bear  
 Is my poor Bet, my piebald Talking Mare,  
 Gone curby in her hocks from standing up.  
 That's the last drop that overfills the cup.  
 My Bet's been like a Christian friend for years.

KING COLE. Now courage, friend, no good can come from  
 tears.

I know a treatment for a curby hock  
 Good both for inward sprain or outward knock.  
 Here's the receipt; it's sure as flowers in spring;  
 A certain cure, the Ointment of the King.

That cures your mare; your troubles Time will right;  
 A man's ill-fortune passes like the night.  
 Times are already mending at their worst;  
 Think of Spent Simmy when his roof-beam burst.  
 His ruined roof fell on him in a rain  
 Of hidden gold that built it up again.  
 So, courage, and believe God's providence.  
 Lo, here, the city shining like new pence,  
 To welcome you; the Prince is lodging there.  
 Lo, you, the banners flying like a fair.  
 Your circus will be crowded twenty deep.  
 This city is a field for you to reap,  
 For thousands must have come to see the Prince,  
 And all are here, all wanting fun. And since  
 The grass was green, all men have loved a show.  
 Success is here, so let your trouble go.  
 THE SHOWMAN. Well, blessings on your heart for speaking  
 so;

It may be that the tide will turn at last.

But royal tours have crossed me in the past

And killed my show, and maybe will again.

One hopes for little after months of rain,

And the little that one hopes one does not get.

THE WIFE. Look, Will, the city gates with sentries set.

THE SHOWMAN. It looks to me as if the road were barred.

KING COLE. They are some soldiers of the bodyguard.

I hope, the heralds of your fortune's change.

"Now take this frowsy circus off the range,"

The soldiers at the city entrance cried;

"Keep clear the town, you cannot pass inside,

The Prince is here, with other things to do

Than stare at gangs of strollers such as you."

THE SHOWMAN. But I am billed to play here; and must play.

THE SOLDIERS. No must at all. You cannot play to-day,

Nor pitch your tents within the city bound.

THE SHOWMAN. Where can I, then?

THE SOLDIERS. Go, find some other ground.

A POLICEMAN. Pass through the city. You can pitch and  
play

One mile beyond it, after five to-day.

THE SHOWMAN. One mile beyond, what use is that to  
me?

A POLICEMAN. Those are the rules, here printed, you can  
see.

THE SHOWMAN. But let me see the Mayor, to make sure.

THE SOLDIERS. These are his printed orders, all secure.

Pass through or back, you must not linger here,

Blocking the road with all this circus gear.

Which will you do, then; back or pass along?

THE SHOWMAN. Pass.

THE SOLDIERS. Then away, and save your breath for  
song,

We cannot bother with your right and wrong.

George, guide these waggon through the western gate.

Now, march, d'ye hear? and do not stop to bait

This side a mile; for that 's the order. March!

The Showman toppled like a broken arch.  
The line squall roared upon them with loud lips.

A green-lit strangeness followed, like eclipse

They passed within, but, when within, King Cole  
Slipped from the van to head the leading team.  
He breathed into his flute his very soul,  
A noise like waters in a pebbly stream,  
And straight the spirits that inhabit dream  
Came round him, and the rain-squall roared its last,  
And bright the wind-vane shifted as it passed.

And in the rush of sun and glittering cloud  
That followed on the storm, he led the way,  
Fluting the sodden circus through the crowd  
That trod the city streets in holiday.  
And lo, a marvellous thing, the gouted clay  
Splashed on the waggons and the horses, glowed,  
They shone like embers as they trod the road.

And round the tired horses came the Powers  
That stir men's spirits, waking or asleep,  
To thoughts like planets and to acts like flowers,  
Out of the inner wisdom's beauty deep:  
These led the horses, and, as marshalled sheep  
Fronting a dog, in line, the people stared  
At those bright waggons led by the bright-haired.

And, as they marched, the spirits sang, and all  
The horses crested to the tune and stepped  
Like centaurs to a passionate festival  
With shining throats that mantling criniers swept  
And all the hearts of all the watchers leapt  
To see those horses passing and to hear  
That song that came like blessing to the ear.

And, to the crowd the circus artists seemed  
Splendid, because the while that singing quired  
Each artist was the part that he had dreamed  
And glittered with the Power he desired,  
Women and men, no longer wet or tired  
From long despair, now shone like queens and kings,  
There they were crowned with their imaginings.

And with them, walking by the vans, there came  
The wild things from the woodland and the mead,  
The red stag, with his tender-stepping dame,  
Branched, and high-tongued and ever taking heed.  
Nose-wrinkling rabbits nibbling at the weed,  
The hares that box by moonlight on the hill,  
The bright trout's death, the otter from the mill.

There, with his mask made virtuous, came the fox,  
Talking of landscape while he thought of meat;  
Blood-loving weasels, honey-harrying brocks,  
Stoats, and the mice that build among the wheat.  
Dormice, and moles with little hands for feet,  
The water-rat that gnaws the yellow flag,  
Toads from the stone and merrows from the quag.

And over them flew birds of every kind,  
Whose way, or song, or speed, or beauty brings  
Delight and understanding to the mind;  
The bright-eyed, feathery, thready-leggèd things.  
There they, too, sang amid a rush of wings,  
With sweet, clear cries and gleams from wing and crest  
Blue, scarlet, white, gold plume and speckled breast.

And all the vans seemed grown with living leaves  
And living flowers, the best September knows,  
Moist poppies scarlet from the Hilcote sheaves,  
Green-fingered bine that runs the barley-rows,  
Pale candylips, and those intense blue blows  
That trail the porches in the autumn dusk,  
Tempting the noiseless moth to tongue their musk.

So, tired thus, so tended, and so sung,  
They crossed the city through the marvelling crowd.  
Maids with wide eyes from upper windows hung,  
The children waved their toys and sang aloud.  
But in his van the beaten showman bowed  
His head upon his hands, and wept, not knowing  
Aught of what passed except that wind was blowing.

All through the town the fluting led them on,  
But near the western gate King Cole retired;  
And, as he ceased, the vans no longer shone,  
The bright procession dimmed like lamps expired;  
Again with muddy vans and horses tired,  
And artists cross and women out of luck,  
The sodden circus plodded through the muck.

The crowd of following children loitered home;  
Maids shut the windows lest more rain should come;  
The circus left the streets of flowers and flags,  
King Cole walked with it, huddling in his rags.  
They reached the western gate and sought to pass.

"Take back this frowsy show to where it was,"  
The sergeant of the gateway-sentry cried;  
"You know quite well you cannot pass outside."

THE SHOWMAN. But we were told to pass here, by the guard.

THE SERGEANT. Here are the printed orders on the card.  
No traffic, you can read. Clear out.

THE SHOWMAN. But where?

THE SERGEANT. Where you're not kicked from, or there's room to spare.

Go back and out of town the way you came.

THE SHOWMAN. I've just been sent from there. Is this a game?

THE SERGEANT. You'll find it none, my son, if that's your tone.

THE SHOWMAN. You redcoats; ev'n your boots are not your own.

THE SERGEANT. No, they're the Queen's; I represent the Queen.

THE SHOWMAN. Pipeclay your week's accounts, you red marine.

THE SERGEANT. Thank you, I will. Now vanish. Right-about.

THE SHOWMAN. Right, kick the circus in or kick it out.

But kick us, kick us hard, we've got no friends,  
We've no Queen's boots or busbies on our ends;  
We're poor, we like it, no one cares; besides,  
These dirty artists ought to have thick hides.  
The dust, like us, is fit for boots to stamp,  
None but Queen's redcoats are allowed to camp  
In this free country.

A POLICEMAN. What's the trouble here?

THE SHOWMAN. A redcoat, sadly needing a thick ear.

THE POLICEMAN. The show turned back? No, sergeant,  
let them through.

They can't turn back, because the Prince is due.

Best let them pass.

THE SERGEANT. Then pass; and read the rules  
Another time.

THE SHOWMAN. You fat, red-coated fools.

THE POLICEMAN. Pass right along.

They passed. Beyond the town  
A farmer gave them leave to settle down  
In a green field beside the Oxford road.  
There the spent horses ceased to drag the load;  
The tent was pitched beneath a dropping sky,  
The green-striped tent with all its gear awry.  
The men drew close to grumble: in the van  
The showman parted from the wandering man.

THE SHOWMAN. You see; denied a chance; denied bare  
bread.

KING COLE. I know the stony road that artists tread.

THE SHOWMAN. You take it very mildly, if you do.

How would you act if this were done to you?

KING COLE. Go to the mayor.

THE SHOWMAN. I am not that kind, •

I'll kneel to no Court prop with painted rind.

You and your snivelling to them may go hang.

I say: "God curse the Prince and all his gang."

THE WIFE. Ah, no, my dear, for Life hurts every one,

Without our cursing. Let the poor Prince be;

We artist folk are happier folk than he,

Hard as it is.

THE SHOWMAN. I say: God let him see.

And taste and know this misery that he makes.  
He strains a poor man's spirit till it breaks,  
And then he hangs him, while a poor man's gift  
He leaves unhelped, to wither or to drift.  
Sergeants at city gates are all his care.  
We are but outcast artists in despair.

They dress in scarlet and he gives them gold.  
KING COLE. Trust still to Life, the day is not yet old.

THE SHOWMAN. By God! our lives are all we have to trust.

KING COLE. Life changes every day and ever must.

THE SHOWMAN. It has not changed with us, this season,  
yet.

KING COLE. Life is as just as Death; Life pays its debt.

THE SHOWMAN. What justice is there in our suffering  
so?

KING COLE. This: that not knowing, we should try to  
know.

THE SHOWMAN. Try. A sweet doctrine for a broken  
heart.

KING COLE. The best (men say) in every manly part.

THE SHOWMAN. Is it, by Heaven? I have tried it, I.

I tell you, friend, your justice is a lie;

Your comfort is a lie, your peace a fraud;

Your trust a folly and your cheer a gaud.

I know what men are, having gone these roads.

Poor bankrupt devils, sweating under loads

While others suck their blood and smile and smile.

You be an artist on the roads awhile,

You'll know what justice comes with suffering then.

KING COLE. Friend, I am one grown old with sorrowing  
men.

THE SHOWMAN. The old are tamed, they have not blood  
to feel.

KING COLE. They've blood to hurt, if not enough to  
heal.

I have seen sorrow close and suffering close.

I know their ways with men, if any knows.

I know the harshness of the way they have

To loose the base and prison up the brave.

I know that some have found the depth they trod

In deepest sorrow, is the heart of God.

Up on the bitter iron there is peace.

In the dark night of prison comes release,  
 In the black midnight still the cock will crow.  
 There is a help that the abandoned know  
 Deep in the heart, that conquerors cannot feel.  
 Abide in hope the turning of the wheel,  
 The luck will alter and the star will rise.

His presence seemed to change before their eyes.  
 The old, bent, ragged, glittering, wandering fellow,  
 With thready blood-streaks in the ridged yellow  
 Of cheek and eye, seemed changed to one who held  
 Earth and the spirit like a king of old.  
 He spoke again: "You have been kind," said he.  
 "In your own trouble you have thought of me.  
 God will repay. To him who gives is given,  
 Corn, water, wine, the world, the starry heaven."

Then, like a poor old man, he took his way  
 Back to the city, while the showman gazed  
 After his figure like a man amazed.

THE WIFE. I think that traveller was an angel sent.

THE SHOWMAN. A most strange man. I wonder what he meant.

THE WIFE. Comfort was what he meant, in our distress.

THE SHOWMAN. No words of his can make our trouble less.

THE WIFE. O, Will, he made me feel the luck would change.

Look at him, husband; there is something strange  
 About him there; a robin redbreast comes  
 Hopping about his feet as though for crumbs,  
 And little long-tailed tits and wrens that sing  
 Perching upon him.

THE SHOWMAN. What a wondrous thing!  
 I've read of such, but never seen it.

THE WIFE. Look,  
 These were the dishes and the food he took.

THE SHOWMAN. Yes; those were they. What of it?

THE WIFE. Did he eat?

THE SHOWMAN. Yes; bread and cheese; he would not touch  
 the meat.



THE WIFE. But see, the cheese is whole, the loaf unbroken,  
And both are fresh. And see, another token:—

Those hard green apples that the farmer gave  
Have grown to these gold globes, like Blenheims brave;  
And look, how came these plums of Pershore here?

THE SHOWMAN. We have been sitting with a saint, my  
dear.

THE WIFE. Look at the butterflies!

Like floating flowers

Came butterflies, the souls of summer hours,  
Fluttering about the van; Red Admirals rich,  
Scarlet and pale on breathing speeds of pitch,  
Brimstones, like yellow poppy petals blown,  
Brown ox-eyed Peacocks in their purpled roan,  
Blue, silvered things that haunt the grassy chalk,  
Green Hairstreaks bright as green shoots on a stalk,  
And that dark prince, the oakwood haunting thing  
Dyed with blue burnish like the mallard's wing.

“He was a saint of God,” the showman cried.

Meanwhile, within the town, from man to man  
The talk about the wondrous circus ran.  
All were agreed, that nothing ever known  
Had thrilled so tense the marrow in their bone.

All were agreed, that sights so beautiful  
Made the Queen's Court with all its soldiers dull,  
Made all the red-wrapped masts and papered strings  
Seem fruit of death, not lovely living things.  
And some said loudly that though time were short,  
Men still might hire the circus for the Court.  
And some, agreeing, sought the Mayor's hall,  
To press petition for the show's recall.

But as they neared the hall, behold, there came  
A stranger to them dressed as though in flame;  
An old, thin, grinning glitterer, decked with green,  
With thready blood-streaks on his visage lean,

And at his wrinkled eyes a look of mirth  
Not common among men who walk the earth;  
Yet from his pocket poked a flute of wood,  
And little birds were following him for food.

"Sirs," said King Cole (for it was he), "I know  
You seek the Mayor, but you need not so;  
I have this moment spoken with his grace.  
He grants the circus warrant to take place  
Within the city, should the Prince see fit  
To watch such pastime; here is his permit.  
I go this instant to the Prince to learn  
His wish herein: wait here till I return."

They waited while the old man passed the sentry  
Beside the door, and vanished through the entry.  
They thought, "This old man shining like New Spain,  
Must be the Prince's lordly chamberlain.  
His cloth of gold so shone, it seemed to burn;  
Wait till he comes." They stayed for his return.

Meanwhile, above, the Prince stood still to bide  
The nightly mercy of the eventide,  
Brought nearer by each hour that chimed and ceased.  
His head was weary with the city feast  
But newly risen from. He stood alone  
As heavy as the day's foundation stone.

The room he stood in was an ancient hall.  
Portraits of long dead men were on the wall.  
From the dull crimson of their robes there stared  
Passionless eyes, long dead, that judged and glared.  
Above them were the oaken corbels set,  
Of angels reaching hands that never met,  
Where in the spring the swallows came to build.

It was the meeting chamber of the Guild.

From where he stood, the Prince could see a yard  
Paved with old slabs and cobbles cracked and scarred  
Where weeds had pushed, and tiles and broken glass  
Had fallen and been trodden in the grass.  
A gutter dripped upon it from the rain.

"It puts a crown of lead upon my brain  
To live this life of princes," thought the Prince.  
"To be a king is to be like a quince,  
Bitter himself, yet flavour to the rest.  
To be a cat among the hay were best;  
There in the upper darkness of the loft,  
With green eyes bright, soft-lying, purring soft,  
Hearing the rain without; not forced, as I,  
To lay foundation stones until I die,  
Or sign State-papers till my hand is sick.  
The man who plaits straw crowns upon a rick  
Is happier in his crown than I the King.  
And yet, this day, a very marvellous thing  
Came by me as I walked the chamber here.  
Once in my childhood, in my seventh year,  
I saw them come, and now they have returned,  
Those strangers, riding upon cars that burned,  
Or seemed to burn, with gold, while music thrilled,  
Then beauty following till my heart was filled,  
And life seemed peopled from eternity.

They brought down Beauty and Wisdom from the sky  
Into the streets, those strangers; I could see  
Beauty and wisdom looking up at me  
As then, in childhood, as they passed below.

Men would not let me know them long ago,  
Those strangers bringing joy. They will not now.  
I am a prince with gold about my brow;  
Duty, not joy, is all a prince's share.  
And yet, those strangers from I know not where,  
From glittering lands, from unknown cities far  
Beyond the sea-plunge of the evening star,  
Would give me life, which princedom cannot give.  
They would be revelation: I should live.

I may not deal with Wisdom, being a king."

There came a noise of some one entering;  
He turned his weary head to see who came.

It was King Cole, arrayed as though in flame,  
Like a white opal glowing from within,  
He entered there in snowy cramoisin.  
The Prince mistook him for a city lord,  
He turned to him and waited for his word.

"Sir," said King Cole, "I come to bring you news.  
Sir, in the weary life that princes use  
There is scant time for any prince or king  
To taste delights that artists have and bring.  
But here, to-night, no other duty calls,  
And circus artists are without the walls.  
Will you not see them, sir?"

THE PRINCE. Who are these artists; do they paint or write?

KING COLE. No, but they serve the arts and love delight.

THE PRINCE. What can they do?

KING COLE. They know full many a rite  
That holds the watcher spell-bound, and they know  
Gay plays of ghosts and jokes of long ago;  
And beauty of bright speed their horses bring,  
Ridden bare-backed at gallop round the ring  
By girls who stand upon the racing team.  
Jugglers they have, of whom the children dream,  
Who pluck live rabbits from between their lips  
And balance marbles on their finger-tips.  
Will you not see them, sir? And then, they dance.

"Ay," said the Prince, "and thankful for the chance.  
So thankful, that these bags of gold shall buy  
Leave for all comers to be glad as I.  
And yet, I know not if the Court permits.  
Kings' pleasures must be sifted through the wits  
Or want of wit of many a courtly brain.  
I get the lees and chokings of the drain,  
Not the bright rippling that I perish for."

KING COLE. Sir, I will open the forbidden door,  
Which, opened, they will enter all in haste.  
The life of man is stronger than good taste.

THE PRINCE. Custom is stronger than the life of man.

KING COLE. Custom is but a way that life began.

THE PRINCE. A withering way that makes the leafage fall,  
Custom, like Winter, is the King of all.

KING COLE. Winter makes water solid, yet the spring,  
That is but flowers, is a stronger thing.

Custom, the ass man rides, will plod for years,  
But laughter kills him and he dies at tears.  
One word of love, one spark from beauty's fire,  
And custom is a memory; listen, sire.

Then at a window looking on the street  
He played his flute like leaves or snowflakes falling,  
Till men and women, passing, thought: "How sweet;  
These notes are in our hearts like flowers falling."  
And then, they thought, "An unknown voice is calling  
Like April calling to the seed in earth;  
Madness is quickening deadness into birth."

And then, as in the spring when first men hear,  
Beyond the black-twigged hedge, the lambling's cry  
Coming across the snow, a note of cheer  
Before the storm-cock tells that spring is nigh,  
Before the first green bramble pushes shy,  
And all the blood leaps at the lambling's notes,  
The piping brought men's hearts into their throats.

Till all were stirred, however old and grand;  
Generals bestarred, old statesmen, courtiers prim  
(Whose lips kissed nothing but the monarch's hand),  
Stirred in their courtly minds' recesses dim,  
The sap of life stirred in the dreary limb.  
The old eyes brightened o'er the pouncet-box,  
Remembering loves, and brawls, and mains of cocks.

And through the town the liquid piping's gladness  
Thrilled on its way, rejoicing all who heard,  
To thrust aside their dulness or their sadness  
And follow blithely as the fluting stirred.  
They hurried to the guild like horses spurred.  
There in the road they mustered to await,  
They knew not what, a dream, a joy, a fate.

And man to man in exaltation cried:  
"Something has come to make us young again:  
Wisdom has come, and Beauty, Wisdom's bride,  
And youth like flowering April after rain."  
But still the fluting piped and men were fain  
To sing and ring the bells, they knew not why  
Save that their hearts were in an ecstasy.

Then to the balcony above them came  
King Cole the shining in his robe of flame;  
Behind him came the Prince, who smiled and bowed.  
King Cole made silence: then addressed the crowd.

"Friends, fellow mortals, bearers of the ghost  
That burns, and breaks its lamp, but is not lost,  
This day, for one brief hour, a key is given  
To all, however poor, to enter heaven.  
The Bringers Down of Beauty from the stars  
Have reached this city in their golden cars.  
They ask, to bring you beauty, if you will.

You do not answer: rightly, you are still.  
But you will come, to watch the image move  
Of all you dreamed or had the strength to love.  
Come to the Ring, the image of the path  
That this our planet through the Heaven hath;  
Behold man's skill, man's wisdom, man's delight,  
And woman's beauty, imaged to the height.

Come, for our rulers come; and Death, whose feet  
Tread at the door, permits a minute's sweet;  
To each man's soul vouchsafes a glimpse, a gleam,  
A touch, a breath of his intensest dream.

Now, to that glimpse, that moment, come with me;  
Our rulers come.

O brother, let there be  
Such welcome to our Prince as never was.  
Let there be flowers under foot, not grass,  
Flowers and scented rushes and the sprays  
Of purple bramble reddening into blaze.

Let there be bells rung backward till the tune  
Be as the joy of all the bees in June.  
Let float your flags, and let your lanterns rise  
Like fruit upon the trees in Paradise,  
In many-coloured lights as rich as Rome  
O'er road and tent; and let the children come,  
It is their world, these Beauty Dwellers bring."

Then, like the song of all the birds of spring  
He played his flute, and all who heard it cried,  
"Strew flowers before our rulers to the Ring."  
The courtiers hurried for their coats of pride,  
The upturned faces in that market wide  
Glowed in the sunset to a beauty grave  
Such as the faces of immortals have.

And work was laid aside on desk and bench,  
The red-lined ledger summed no penny more,  
From lamp-blackened fingers the mechanic's wrench  
Dropped to the kinking wheel chains on the floor,  
The farmer shut the hen roost: at the store  
The boys put up the shutters and ran hooting  
Wild with delight in freedom to the fluting.

And now the fluting led that gathered tide  
Of men and women forward through the town,  
And flowers seemed to fall from every side,  
White starry blossoms such as brooks bow down,  
White petals clinging in the hair and gown;  
And those who marched there thought that starry flowers  
Grew at their sides, as though the streets were bowers.

And all, in marching, thought, "We go to see  
Life, not the daily coil, but as it is  
Lived in its beauty in eternity,  
Above base aim, beyond our miseries;  
Life that is speed and colour and bright bliss,  
And beauty seen and strained for, and possessed  
Even as a star forever in the breast."

The fluting led them through the western gate,  
From many a tossing torch their faces glowed,  
Bright-eyed and ruddy-featured and elate;  
They sang and scattered flowers upon the road,  
Still in their hair the starry blossoms snowed;  
They saw ahead the green-striped tent, their mark,  
Lit now and busy in the gathering dark.

There at the vans and in the green-striped tent  
The circus artists growled their discontent.  
Close to the gate a lighted van there was;  
The showman's wife thrust back its window glass,  
And leaned her head without to see who came  
To buy a ticket for the evening's game.

A roll of tickets and a plate of pence  
(For change) lay by her as she leaned from thence  
She heard the crowd afar, but in her thought  
She said: "That 's in the city; it is nought.  
They glorify the Queen."

Though sick at heart  
She wore her spangles for her evening's part.  
To dance upon the barebacked horse and sing.  
Green velvet was her dress, with tinselling.  
Her sad, worn face had all the nobleness  
That lovely spirits gather from distress.

"No one to-night," she thought, "no one to-night."

Within the tent, a flare gave blowing light.  
There, in their scarlet cart, the bandsmen tuned  
Bugles that whinnied, flageolets that crooned  
And strings that whined and grunted.

Near the band  
Piebald and magpie horses stood at hand  
Nosing at grass beneath the green-striped dome  
While men caressed them with the curry-comb.

The clowns, with whited, raddled faces, heaped  
Old horse cloths round them to the chins; they peeped  
Above the rugs; their cigarette ends' light  
Showing black eyes, and scarlet smears and white.



They watched the empty benches, and the wry  
Green curtain door which no one entered by.  
Two little children entered and sat still  
With bright wide opened eyes that stared their fill,  
And red lips round in wonder smeared with tints  
From hands and handkerchiefs and peppermints.

A farm lad entered. That was all the house.

"Strike up the band to give the folk a rouse,"  
The showman said. "They must be all outside."  
He said it boldly, though he knew he lied.

Sad as a funeral march for pleasure gone  
The band lamented out, "He's got them on."  
Then paused, as usual, for the crowd to come.

Nobody came, though from without a hum  
Of instruments and singing slowly rose.  
"Free feast, with fireworks and public shows,"  
The bandsmen growled. "An empty house again.  
Two children and a ploughboy and the rain.  
And then a night march through the mud," they said.

Now to the gate, King Cole his piping played.  
The showman's wife from out her window peering  
Saw, in the road, a crowd with lanterns nearing,  
And, just below her perch, a man who shone  
As though white flame were his caparison;  
One upon whom the great-eyed hawk-moths tense  
Settled with feathery feet and quivering sense,  
Till the white, gleaming robe seemed stuck with eyes.

It was the grinning glitterer, white and wise,  
King Cole, who said, "Madam, the Court is here,  
The Court, the Prince, the Queen, all drawing near,  
We here, the vanguard, set them on their way.  
They come intent to see your circus play.  
They ask that all who wish may enter free,  
And in their princely hope that this may be  
They send you these plump bags of minted gold."  
He gave a sack that she could scarcely hold.

She dropped it trembling, muttering thanks, and then  
She cried: "O master, I must tell the men."  
She rushed out of her van: she reached the Ring;  
Called to her husband, "Will, the Queen and King,  
Here at the very gate to see the show!"

"Light some more flares," said Will, "to make a glow.  
'God save the Queen,' there, bandmen; lively, boys.  
Come on, 'God save our gracious'; make a noise.  
Here, John, bring on the piebalds to the centre,  
We'll have the horses kneeling as they enter."  
All sang, and rushed. Without, the trumpets brayed.

Now children, carrying paper lanterns, made  
A glowing alley to the circus door;  
Then others scattered flowers to pave a floor,  
Along the highway leading from the town.  
Rust-spotted bracken green they scattered down,  
Blue cornflowers and withering poppies red,  
Gold charlock, thrift, the purple hardihead,  
Harebells, the milfoil white, September clover,  
And boughs that berry red when summer's over,  
All autumn flowers, with yellow ears of wheat.

Then with bruised, burning gums that made all sweet,  
Came censer-bearing pages, and then came  
Bearers in white with cressets full of flame,  
Whose red tongues made the shadows dance like devils.  
Then the blithe flutes that pipe men to the revels  
Thrilled to the marrow softly as men marched.  
'Then, tossing leopard-skins from crests that arched,  
The horses of the kettle-drummers stepped.  
Then with a glitter of bright steel there swept  
The guard of knights, each pennon-bearer bold  
Girt in a crimson cloak with spangs of gold.  
Then came the Sword and Mace, and then the four  
Long silver trumpets thrilling to the core  
Of people's hearts their sound. Then two by two,  
Proud in caparisons of kingly blue,  
Bitted with bars of gold, in silver shod,  
Treading like kings, cream-coloured stallions trod.

Dragging the carriage with the Prince and Queen,  
The Corporation, walking, closed the scene.  
Then came the crowd in-surging like the wave  
That closes up the gash the clipper cleave.

Swift in the path their majesties would tread  
The showman flung green baize and turkey red.  
Within the tent, with bunting, ropes and bags  
They made a Royal Box festooned with flags.  
Even as the Queen arrived, the work was done,  
The seven piebald horses kneeled like one,  
The bandsmen blew their best, while, red as beet,  
The showman bowed his rulers to their seat.

Then, through the door, came courtiers wigged and starred;  
The crimson glitterers of the bodyguard;  
The ladies of the Court, broad-browed and noble,  
Lovely as evening stars o'er seas in trouble;  
The aldermen, in furs, with golden chains,  
Old cottagers in smocks from country lanes,  
Shepherds half dumb from silence on the down,  
And merchants with their households from the town,  
And, in the front, two rows of eager-hearted  
Children with shining eyes and red lips parted.

Even as the creeping waves that brim the pool  
One following other filled the circus full.

The showman stood beside his trembling wife.  
"Never," he said, "in all our travelling life  
Has this old tent looked thus, the front seats full  
With happy little children beautiful.  
Then all this glorious Court, tier after tier!  
O would our son, the wanderer, were here,  
Then we'd die happy!"

"Would he were!" said she,  
"It was my preaching forced him to be free,"  
The showman said.

"Ah, no," his wife replied,  
"The great world's glory and the young blood's pride,  
Those forced him from us, never you, my dear."

"I would be different if we had him here Again," the showman said; "but we must start. But all this splendour takes away my heart, I am not used to playing to the King."

"Look," said his wife, "the stranger, in the Ring."

There in the Ring indeed, the stranger stood,  
King Cole, the shining, with his flute of wood,  
Waiting until the chattering Court was stilled.

Then from his wooden flute his piping thrilled,  
Till all was tense, and then the leaping fluting  
Clamoured as flowering clamours for the fruiting.  
And round the Ring came Dodo, the brown mare,  
Pied like a tiger-moth; her bright shoes tare  
The scattered petals, while the clown came after  
Like life, a beauty chased by tragic laughter.  
The showman entered in and cracked his whip.

Then followed fun and skill and horsemanship,  
Marvellous all, for all were at their best.  
Never had playing gone with such a zest  
To those good jesters; never had the tent  
So swiftly answered to their merriment  
With cheers, the artist's help, the actor's life.  
Then, at the end, the showman and his wife  
Stood at the entrance listening to the cheers.  
They were both happy to the brink of tears.

King Cole came close and whispered in their ears:  
"There is a soldier here who says he knew  
You, long ago, and asks to speak to you.  
A sergeant in the guard, a handsome blade."

"Mother!" the sergeant said. "What, Jack!" she said,  
"Our son come back! look, father, here 's our son."

"Bad pennies do come home to everyone,"  
The sergeant said. "And if you'll have me home,  
And both forgive me, I'll be glad to come."

"Why, son," the showman said, "the fault was ours."

Now a bright herald trod across the flowers  
To bid the artists to the Queen and King,  
Who thanked them for the joyful evening,  
And shook each artist's hand with words of praise.  
"Our happiest hour," they said, "for many days.  
You must perform at Court at Christmastide."

They left their box: men flung the curtains wide,  
The horses kneeled like one as they withdrew.  
They reached the curtained door and loitered through.  
The audience, standing, sang, "God save the Queen."  
The hour of the showman's life had been.

Now once again a herald crossed the green  
To tell the showman that a feast was laid,  
A supper for the artists who had played  
By the Queen's order, in a tent without.

In the bright moonlight at the gate the rout  
Of courtiers, formed procession to be gone,  
Orders were called, steel clinked, and jewels shone,  
The watchers climbed the banks and took their stands.

The circus artists shook each other's hands,  
Their quarrels were forgotten and forgiven,  
Old friendships were restored and sinners shriven.  
"We find we cannot part from Will," they said.

And while they talked, the juggler took the maid  
Molly, the singer, to the hawthorn glade  
Behind the green-striped tent, and told his love,  
A wild delight, beyond her hope, enough  
Beyond her dream to brim her eyes with tears.

Now came a ringing cry to march; and cheers  
Rose from the crowd; the bright procession fared  
Back to the city while the trumpets blared.

So the night ended, and the Court retired.  
Back to the town the swaying torches reeked,  
Within the green-striped tent the lights expired,  
The dew dripped from the canvas where it leaked,  
Dark, in the showman's van, a cricket creaked,  
But, near the waggons, fire was glowing red  
On happy faces where the feast was spread.

Gladly they supped, those artists of the show;  
Then by the perfect moon, together timed,  
They struck the green-striped tent and laid it low,  
Even as the quarter before midnight chimed.  
Then putting-to the piebald nags, they climbed  
Into their vans and slowly stole away,  
Along Blown Hilcote on the Icknield Way.

And as the rumbling of the waggons died  
By Aston Tirrold and the Moretons twain,  
With axle-clatter in the countryside,  
Lit by the moon and fragrant from the rain,  
King Cole moved softly in the Ring again,  
Where now the owls and he were left alone:  
The night was loud with water upon stone.

He watched the night; then taking up his flute,  
He breathed a piping of this life of ours,  
The half-seen prize, the difficult pursuit,  
The passionate lusts that shut us in their towers,  
The love that helps us on, the fear that lowers,  
The pride that makes us and the pride that mars,  
The beauty and the truth that are our stars.

And man, the marvellous thing, that in the dark  
Works with his little strength to make a light,  
His wit that strikes, his hope that tends, a spark,  
His sorrow of soul in toil, that brings delight,  
His friends, who make salt sweet and blackness bright,  
His birth and growth and change; and death the wise.  
His peace, that puts a hand upon his eyes.

All these his pipings breathed of, until twelve  
Struck on the belfry tower with tremblings numb  
(Such as will shudder in the axe's helve  
When the head strikes) to tell his hour was come.  
Out of the living world of Christendom  
He dimmed like mist till one could scarcely note  
The robins nestling to his old grey coat.

Dimmer he grew, yet still a glimmering stayed  
Like light on cobwebs, but it dimmed and died.  
Then there was naught but moonlight in the glade,  
Moonlight and water and an owl that cried.  
Far overhead a rush of birds' wings sighed,  
From migrants going south until the spring.  
The night seemed fanned by an immortal wing.

But where the juggler trudged beside his love  
Each felt a touching from beyond our ken,  
From that bright kingdom where the souls who strove.  
Live now for ever, helping living men.  
And as they kissed each other; even then  
Their brows seemed blessed, as though a hand unseen  
Had crowned their loves with never-withering green.

*From* A KING'S DAUGHTER

THE TALE OF NIREUS

ONCE long ago young Nireus was the King  
In Syme Island, so the stories say,  
And at his birth the gods made holiday,  
And blessed the child and gave him each one thing,

Courage, and skill, and beauty, and bright eyes,  
Wisdom, and charm, and many another power,  
So that he grew to manhood like a flower  
For beauty, and like God for being wise.

Now Nireus' friend was Paris, out of Troy,  
Paris, the prince, the archer, who had seen  
The goddesses within the forest green;  
King Priam's son, a peacock of a boy.

At Sparta's court, not far from Syme Isle,  
Bright Helen lived, King Menelaus' Queen,  
The loveliest woman that has ever been,  
Who made all mortals love her by her smile.

Nireus and Paris went together there  
To Helen's palace; and when Nireus saw  
Helen the Queen, the lovely without flaw,  
He loved her like her shadow everywhere.

And Paris, when he saw her with her mate,  
Helen, the rose, beside that withered weed,  
Loved her no less, but with a young man's greed  
That wants the moon from heaven and cannot wait.

Straightway he wooed Queen Helen to be his,  
And won her love, and cried to Nireus then,  
"O Nireus, help to save us from this den,  
Lend us your ship to bring us out of this."



So Nireus, though his heart was torn with pain,  
Well knowing what would come, yet took the pair  
To many-towered Troy and left them there,  
To live in love and be the city's bane.

When Menelaus knew of Helen's flight,  
He led all Greece in arms to punish Troy,  
Nireus went with him in the fleet, and joy  
Ceased in the world, for all men went to fight.

Nine years they fought there in the tamarisk field,  
And in the tenth, in some blind midnight stour,  
Nireus killed Paris underneath the tower.  
Men bore him back to Helen on his shield.

Then Troy was sacked and Menelaus took  
Beautiful Helen as his prisoner home,  
And locked her in his castle as a gnome  
Might lock a gem on which no man might look.

Thus Nireus lost his love, and killed his friend,  
And knew despair; so going to his ship,  
He sailed to where the constellations dip,  
In the great west, to look for the world's end.

When Troy was sacked and all her towers  
Blazed up and shook into the sky  
Smoke like great trees and flame like flowers,  
And Priam's bodyguard did die,

Then the Queen's women snatched up spears,  
And fought their way out of the gate;  
Seized horses from the charioteers  
And fled like mountain-streams in spate.

They would not stay for slavery  
To some Greek lord until they died,  
They rode the forest to be free,  
Up on the peaks of snowy Ide.

And in the forest on a peak  
They hewed a dwelling with the bronze,  
And lived, unconquered by the Greek,  
Fierce, sun-burned women, neither tame nor weak,  
The panther-women called the Amazons.

They lived there on the heights and knew no men.  
Having beheld the lusts of men destroy  
The town of windy Troy,  
They killed all men they met; their only joy  
Was hunting for the wild beasts in the glen.

The wild boar and the many-branching stag,  
Horse-killing panthers hidden by the brook,  
The spotted death among the yellow flag,  
All these with their bright spears these women took.  
All these, and men, for even to be seen  
By men, these hunter-women thought unclean.

So no man saw them save a glimpse afar.  
Of panther-skins flung back, and swift feet flying,  
And the red stag brought low to the fierce Hal  
Of women's spear-thrusts driven in the dying.  
They ruled the crags like wolves, they kept their pride  
Savage and sovereign like the snow on Ide.

Nireus sailed; and a strange wind blew him to islands unseen  
before,  
Where the gods sat throned on the crags with peace on  
their marvellous faces,  
Clouds and the smoke of fire, that glittered and changed, they  
wore  
And unto them came the crying of all man's sorrowful  
races.

They cried to him as he passed, "You are seeking and you  
shall find,  
Not in the way you hope, not in the way foreseen;  
Out of horror of soul, ache, and anguish of mind,  
Out of the desert of all, shall come the leaf that is green."

Then the wind blew on to an island where millet is ever  
in ear,  
And the horses that live in the sea come thronging in  
thousands to eat,  
And the horses that live on the island will never let them  
come near,  
But they fight on the beaches forever with flashing and  
thunder of feet.

Then he sailed by invisible islands, he smelt the fruit on the  
trees,  
And heard the noise in the shipyards, the crowing of  
cocks unseen,  
Then sheered from the roar of breakers and on over unknown  
seas,  
And ever he grieved for Paris, and thought of the beautiful  
Queen.

Then he came to a sea of terror, where monsters rose from  
the sea,  
Things with the beaks of birds and arms like the suckers  
of vines:  
Things like ghosts in the water coming motionlessly  
To tatter the flesh of men with teeth like the cactus-spines.

Over unending water ever he held his course,  
Birds that were curses followed, crying around and above:  
"Nireus, broken by beauty, broken again by remorse,  
Goes to the breaking of death for killing his friend and  
love."

And ever he cursed himself for bringing them both to wreck,  
Helen and Paris, the lovely; and ever the waves seemed filled  
With skull-bones hollow in death, that rose and peered on  
the deck:  
And he thought, "They are those from Troy whom I in  
my madness killed.

"Had I refused, when they asked for my help to escape,  
Paris would still be alive, Troy, the city, would stand,  
And all the killed of the war would be tilling the corn and  
the grape,  
Not ghosts with a curse in the air and torn bones strewing  
the land."

So he sailed; but at night in the dark when the lantern  
bubbled aloft,  
And men lay sleeping, when all save he were asleep,  
And the ship slid on with a gurgle of water soft,  
He knew that the dead of Troy came with him over the  
deep.

Out of the long-backed roller that slid from its crest of foam,  
Gibbered the bloodless dead, white faces with haggard eyes,  
Pointing the bones of their hands at him who had forced them  
from home,  
Their curses came to his ears like little twittering cries.

Whenever he moored at an island for water or food or rest,  
Soon those wraiths of the dead would rise and bid him  
begone,  
To harry the resting gannet out of the roller's crest,  
And carry the curse of his soul to the unknown, on and on.

In the grey of morning  
When the stars were paling,  
Nireus sailing,  
Saw land ahead.  
An island shining  
With city towers,  
Where bells were ringing  
And men singing.

As Nireus stepped ashore there  
He stood staring,  
For all men there  
Were the dead of the war:  
The Greeks and Trojans,  
Beautiful and swift,  
Killed in the trampled tamarisks  
Beneath Troy town.

Stars were in their hair,  
Their brows were crowned with violets,  
They stepped like stags,  
Comrade with comrade.

They had forgotten  
The mud and death,  
The heat and flies  
Of the plain of Troy.

There among them  
Came a prince in scarlet,  
With his hands stretched  
In welcoming.  
It was Paris, his friend,  
Paris whom he killed  
In the midnight raid  
Beneath Troy wall.

Paris cried,  
"Nireus, my comrade,  
Nireus, my beloved,  
My friend of old!  
Here we have forgiven  
What my young man's folly bred,  
We feast as friends  
In the violet fields."

Then he led Nireus  
To the hall of feasting.  
There they feasted  
In the violet fields.  
Three summer days and nights,  
It seemed, they feasted,  
Each summer day and night  
Was ten years long.

Paris and the heroes  
Cried to Nireus,  
"We loved Helen,  
When we were men.  
Now we love her still  
And we see her lonely,  
Old, and haunted  
By her lovers dead.

"Take to Helen  
Gifts from her lovers,  
In her old age find her  
And give her these:  
Beauty and peace  
And our forgiveness,  
And all our thanks  
For what she was."

As they ceased speaking  
The faded from him,  
The island faded,  
Nireus was at sea.  
He and his men  
Were all grown old,  
Thirty years  
Had fallen on them.

As old men failing  
They came to Sparta;  
All unavailing  
Their coming was.  
Helen was gone  
And none knew whither,  
To search for peace  
Or to find release.

Overs the seas  
In lands and islands  
Nireus sought her,  
But could not find.  
For the gods retire  
When men desire,  
Though it burn like fire  
And make men blind.

Full of years and wealth and evil, Menelaus died in  
Sparta,  
And Queen Helen at his bedside stood and looked upon  
him dead,  
He who once had bought her beauty, to be bride to him, by  
barter,  
He whom she had loathed and fled from, now lay silenced  
on the bed.

Bitter thoughts were in her as she looked upon his meanness,  
Thoughts of Paris in his beauty when their love was at its  
height.  
Paris in his morning, and the King in his uncleanness,  
And this dead mean thing, her master, and the winner of  
the fight.  
All was silent in the palace of the King,  
Save the soft-foot watchers whispering;  
All was dark, save in the porch  
The wind-blown fire of a torch,  
And the sentries still as in a stound,  
With their spear-heads drooped upon the ground.

Then she thought: "These two men had me, and a myriad  
men have sickened  
To a fever of a love for me who saw me passing by:  
When they saw me, all their eyes grew bright, and all their  
pulses quickened,  
And to win me or to keep me they went up to Troy to die.

"Now the earthly moon, my beauty, and the rose, my youth,  
have dwindled.  
I am old, my hair is grey, and none remembers  
What a fire in men's hearts Queen Helen kindled  
Ere the fire in Queen Helen turned to embers."  
All was silent in the palace of the King,  
Save the wind-blown torch-flame guttering,  
And a moth that came  
Beating with his wings about the flame,  
And the sentries drawing breath,  
With their spear-heads drooped saluting death.

Then she said: "The gods conspired to give gifts of beauty  
to me,  
And the beauty gave the gift of death to all who came to  
woo me;

Now of all the men who loved me, none remain,  
And of both the men who had me neither knew me  
Surely all my past was evil, for its fruit is bitter pain.

"I will go to some lone island where I am not made a story,  
Where my beauty made no widow, nor no orphan wanting  
bread;

Where no human sorrow suffers the disaster of my glory,

And my eyes may lose the vision of the hauntings of the dead.

"Day and night the dead men haunt me, whom the madness  
of my caring

Brought from home and wives and children to be bones  
upon the plain;

All the panther-like for beauty, all the lion-like for daring,

And they lie among the bindweed now, uncovered by the  
rain."

All was silent in the palace of the King,

Save the soft-foot watchers whispering;

All was dark, save in the porch

The wind-blown fire of a torch,

And the sentries still as in a stound

With their spear-heads drooped upon the ground.

Then she rose, and cloaked her face, and hurried swiftly from  
the city,

And to sea, away from Hellas, but she dared not show her  
face,

For the women and the orphans would have killed her  
without pity:

She had sown her crop of death too far, she found no  
resting-place.

But in inns where people gathered in the evenings after labour,

Where the shepherd's pipe or viol stirred the blind man to  
his verse,

Till the hearers swayed and trembled and the rough man  
touched his neighbour,

They would talk of Troy with sadness, but of Helen with  
a curse.



After long years, when Helen was riding by night  
In storm, in the Ida forest, alone, not knowing the road,  
She saw a light in the blackness; she turned to the light,  
She came to the fort on the crag, the panther-women's  
abode.

Hearing her horse's stamp, they brought her into the yard,  
Those women fierce from the killing of lion or boar or  
man;  
They came with their torches round her, they stared at her  
hard,  
They knew her for Helen the Queen from whom their  
sorrows began.

For years they had longed for her coming, to have her to kill,  
Her beauty a throat for their knives, her body a prey—  
Helen, who ruined their lovers, the root of their ill—  
She said: "I am Helen. Avenge yourselves on me. You  
may."

Still they stared at her there in the torchlight; then one of  
them said:  
"God used you to bring things to be; evil things to our city,  
Evil things to yourself, for your face declares you have paid;  
You have come to the truth like ourselves; we take not  
vengeance, but pity."  
Then they welcomed her into their hold, and when morning  
broke clear,  
They rode with her down to the ruins of what had been  
Troy;  
There they left her alone in the wreck of the thing overdear  
That the gods cannot grant to mankind, but unite to destroy.

Queen Helen left those women of the wood,  
She clambered from her horse and stood again  
Even on the very hill where Troy had stood,  
Where tamarisk shrubs and broom-sprigs and wild grain  
Sprouted from bronze and rib-bones of men slain.

There was the palace where her love had been;  
Stones blackened by the fire and misplaced  
By roots of vines that fed upon the paste  
Of all the pride where she had lived a queen.

Troy was no more than weeds and fire-flaked stone,  
But still the straits ran roaring to the south,  
And still the never-quiet winds were blown  
With scent of meadow-sweet from Simois' mouth.

Yet now no Greeks were moving on the beaches,  
No galleys of the Greeks came oaring in  
Nor did lancer scouts or parties ride the whin,  
Bringing in or checking convoys from the river's upper  
reaches  
Where the forest pines begin.

And the forges were all gone, and all the fires  
Of the camps and burnings of the dead.  
And the grinding of the bronze-shod chariot-tyres  
Rang no more.  
Both in city and on shore  
There were no more shouted orders, clash of arms, or  
marchers' tread.

All was manless now, uncared for; both the streams had left  
their courses.  
There was marsh where corn had grown of old, and there,  
where Paris lay,  
Was an apple-tree with fruit which fed the now wild Trojan  
horses,  
That with bright teeth bit each other;  
Earth made Greek and Trojan brother,  
All the passion that had raged there now was dead and gone  
away.

Then she cried, "I caused the quarrel that brought death  
along these beaches,  
I alone made Troy this ruin, I alone, from haste of  
youth,

From a women's bent, that listens to a lie, if it beseeches;  
Now I stand here old and friendless, having nothing but  
the truth."

There she stopped, for there before her, in the ruins, stood a  
stranger;

"This is changed indeed," he told her, "since I stood here  
once before:

Then it flamed all red to heaven and it rang with death and  
danger,

And I stood here with noble Agammemnon,  
In the thunder of the ending of the war."

Something in the old man's bearing made her start and catch  
her breath.

"You are Nireus, friend," she answered. "You are he who  
brought me here

When my life and love were dear:

Then I came to life and loving, now I come to grief and death.

"There is no small grass, in plain or water,

But grows from the body of one killed

By the deadly love of me, who am Helen, Leda's daughter:

All the young and swift and lovely, all the quick of heart  
are stilled;

I was cause of their going to the slaughter.

Daylong and nightlong their shadows pursue me with evil,

Haunting my thought in the day, killing my rest in the  
night;

Now they have drawn me here; their multitudinous devil

Bids me die where I sinned.

I hear their cry in the wind,

I see their eyes in the light."

Nireus answered, "Ah, not thus, not so, Queen Helen,  
surely,

Are those who died for love of you, to win you or to  
keep!

If they gave their lives, they gave them as a man gives frankly,  
purely,

Without question, comment or complaint,  
The strong heart equal with the faint,  
All content to see your beauty and to tread hard ways to  
sleep.

"Now they know that your beauty made them splendid,  
Splendid to the death; for I have seen,  
Seen and talked, beloved Helen, with the souls of those who  
ended  
In the ruins of this city that has been,  
And they praise your name, they count you still their  
Queen.

"Now come with me, for the ship waits to receive you,  
The wind is fair for Syme; let us start.  
Here, where long ago I lost you, I retrieve you;  
Let us leave this town of broken heart  
For the peace of Syme Harbour and the mirth of Syme  
mart,  
And the calm of knowing sorrow at an end,  
And the quiet of the memory of a friend."

Then they sailed for Syme Island, and the gods were with  
their going,  
For their beauty came upon them both, with youth and  
strength and peace;  
Now they rule and live forever in a spring forever blowing,  
High in Syme where the sun is bright and skylarks never  
cease.

## THE DREAM

WEARY with many thoughts I went to bed.  
And lay for hours staring at the night,  
Thinking of all the millions of the dead  
Who used man's flesh, as I, and loved the light,  
Yet died, for all their power and delight,  
For all their love, and never came again,  
Never, for all our crying, all our pain.

There, through the open windows at my side,  
I saw the stars, and all the tossing wood,  
And, in the moonlight, mothy owls that cried,  
Floating along the covert for their food.  
The night was as a spirit that did brood  
Upon the dead, those multitudes of death  
That had such colour once, and now are breath.

"And all this beauty of the world," I thought,  
"This glory given by God, this life that teems,  
What can we know of them? for life is nought,  
A few short hours of blindness, shot by gleams,  
A few short days of mastery of dreams  
After long years of effort, then an end,  
Then dust on good and bad, on foe and friend."

So, weary with the little time allowed  
To use the power that takes so long to learn,  
I sorrowed as I lay; now low, now loud  
Came music from an hautboy and zithern.  
The house was dark, and yet a light did burn  
There where they played, and in the wainscoting  
The mice that love the dark were junketing.

So, what with sorrow and the noise that seemed  
Like voices speaking from the night's dark heart  
To tell her secret in a tongue undreamed.  
I fell into a dream and walked apart  
Into the night (I thought), into the swart,  
Thin, lightless air in which the planet rides;  
I trod on dark air upward with swift strides.

Though in my dream I gloried as I trod  
Because I knew that I was striding there  
Far from this trouble to the peace of God  
Where all things glow and beauty is made bare.  
A dawning seemed beginning everywhere,  
And then I came into a grassy place,  
Where beauty of bright heart has quiet face.

Lovely it was, and there a castle stood  
Mighty and fair, with golden turrets bright,  
Crowned with gold vanes that swung at the wind's mood  
Full many a hundred feet up in the light.  
The walls were all i'-carven with delight  
Like stone become alive. I entered in.  
Smoke drifted by: I heard a violin.

And as I heard, it seemed, that long before  
That music had crept ghostly to my hearing  
Even as a ghost along the corridor  
Beside dark panelled walls with portraits peering;  
It crept into my brain, blessing and spearing  
Out of the past, yet all I could recall  
Was some dark room with firelight on the wall.

So, entering in, I crossed the mighty hall;  
The volleying smoke from firewood flew about.  
The wind-gusts stirred the hangings on the wall  
So that the woven chivalry stood out  
Wave-like and charging, putting all to rout  
The evil things they fought with, men like beasts,  
Wolf-soldiers, tiger-kings, hyena-priests.

And, steadfast as though frozen, swords on hips,  
Old armour stood at sentry with old spears  
Clutched in steel gloves that glittered at the grips,  
Yet housed the little mouse with pointed ears:  
Old banners drooped above, frayed into tears  
With age and moth that fret the soldier's glory.  
I saw a swallow in the clerestory.

And always from their frames the eyes looked down  
Of most intense souls painted in their joy,  
Their great brows jewelled bright as by a crown  
Of their own thoughts, that nothing can destroy,  
Because pure though is life without alloy,  
Life's very essence from the flesh set free  
A wonder and delight eternally.

And climbing up the stairs with arras hung,  
I looked upon a court of old stones grey,  
Where o'er a globe of gold a galleon swung  
Creaking with age and showing the wind's way.  
There, flattered to a smile, the barn cat lay  
Tasting the sun with purrings drowsily  
Sun-soaked, content, with drowsed green-slitted eye.

I did not know what power led me on  
Save the all-living joy of what came next.  
Down the dim passage doors of glory shone,  
Old panels glowed with many a carven text,  
Old music came in strays, my mind was vexed  
With many a leaping thought; beyond each door  
I thought to meet some friend, dead long before.

So on I went, and by my side, it seemed,  
Paced a great bull, kept from me by a brook  
Which lipped the grass about it as it streamed  
Over the flagroots that the grayling shook;  
Red-felled the bull was, and at times he took  
Assayment of the red earth with his horn  
And wreaked his rage upon the sod upturn.

Yet when I looked was nothing but the arras  
There at my side, with woven knights who glowed  
In coloured silks the running stag to harass.  
There was no stream, yet in my mind abode  
The sense of both beside me as I strode,  
And lovely faces leaned, and pictures came  
Of water in a great sheet like a flame;

Water in terror like a great snow falling,  
Like wool, like smoke, into a vast abysm,  
With thunder of gods fighting and death calling  
And gleaming sunbeams splitted by the prism  
And cliffs that rose and eagles that took chrism  
Even in the very seethe, and then a cave  
Where at a fire I mocked me at the wave.

Mightily rose the cliffs; and mighty trees  
Grew on them; and the caverns, channelled deep,  
Cut through them like dark veins; and like the seas,  
Roaring, the desperate water took its leap;  
Yet dim within the cave, like sound in sleep,  
Came the fall's voice; my flitting fire made  
More truth to me than all the water said.

Yet when I looked, there was the arras only,  
The passage stretching on, the pictured faces,  
The violin below complaining lonely,  
Creeping with sweetness in the mind's sad places,  
And all my mind was trembling with the traces  
Of long dead things, of beautiful sweet friends  
Long since made one with that which never ends.

And as I went the wall seemed built of flowers,  
Long, golden cups of tulips, with firm stems,  
Warm-smelling, for the black bees' drunken hours;  
Striped roses for princesses' diadems;  
And butterflies there were like living gems,  
Scarlet and black, blue damasked, mottled, white,  
Colour alive and happy, living light.



Then through a door I passed into a room  
Where Daniel stood, as I had seen him erst,  
In wisest age, in all its happiest bloom,  
Deep in the red and black of books immersed.  
I would have spoken to him had I durst,  
But might not, I, in that bright chamber strange,  
Where, even as I looked, the walls did change.

For now the walls were as a toppling sea,  
Green, with white crest, on which a ship emerging,  
Strained, with her topsails whining wrinklingly,  
Dark with the glittering sea fires of her surging,  
And, now with thundering horses and men urging,  
The walls were fields on which men rode in pride,  
On horses that tossed firedust in their stride.

And now, the walls were harvest fields whose corn  
Trembled beneath the wrinkling wind in waves  
All golden ripe and ready to be shorn  
By sickling sunburnt reapers singing staves,  
And now, the walls were dark with wandering caves  
That sometimes glowed with fire and sometimes burned  
Where men on anvils fiery secrets learned.

And all these forms of thought and myriads more,  
Passed into books and into Daniel's hand,  
So that he smiled at having such great store  
All red and black as many as the sand,  
Studded with crystals, clasped with many a band  
Of hammered steel. I saw him standing there  
After I woke his pleasure filled the air.

### THE WOMAN SPEAKS

THIS poem appeared to me in a dream one winter morning some years ago. In the dream I was aware of a tall lady, dressed for out-of-doors, with furs and a picture hat. I was aware, at the same time, of the whole of her past life, and of the fact that she was looking for the first time south-westwards upon Lincoln's Inn Fields, early on a calm, sunny Sunday morning. I saw the Fields as she

did, in utter calm, as from the north-eastern pavement; the pigeons were picking food, the sun was shining, each brick and stone was distinct. I was aware of the fact that she had suddenly realized that life might be quiet like this, and that were it so, it would be wonderful. At the same time, I was intensely aware of the whole of this poem, which explained her past, what she saw and what she felt. As she passed out of the dream, the whole of the poem appeared engraven in high relief on an oblong metal plate, from which I wrote it down.

Bitter it is, indeed, in human fate  
When life's supreme temptation comes too late.  
I had a ten years' schooling, where I won  
Prizes for headache and caparison.  
I married well; I kept a husband warm  
With twenty general years of gentle charm.  
We wandered much, where'er our kind resort,  
But not till Sunday to the Inns of Court.  
So then imagine what a joy to see  
The town's grey, vast and unappeased sea  
Suddenly still, and what a hell to learn  
Life might be quiet, could I but return.

### THE RIDER AT THE GATE

A WINDY night was blowing on Rome,  
The cressets guttered on Cæsar's home,  
The fish-boats, moored at the bridge, were breaking  
The rush of the river to yellow foam.

The hinges whined to the shutters shaking,  
When clip-clop-clep came a horse-hoof raking  
The stones of the road at Cæsar's gate;  
The spear-butts jarred at the guard's awaking.

"Who goes there?" said the guard at the gate.  
"What is the news, that you ride so late?"  
"News most pressing, that must be spoken  
To Cæsar alone, and that cannot wait."

"The Cæsar sleeps; you must show a token  
That the news suffice that he be awoken.  
What is the news, and whence do you come?  
For no light cause may his sleep be broken."

"Out of the dark of the sands I come,  
From the dark of death, with news for Rome.  
A word so fell that it must be uttered  
Though it strike the soul of the Cæsar dumb."

*Cæsar turned in his bed and muttered,  
With a struggle for breath the lamp-flame guttered;  
Calpurnia heard her husband moan:*

*"The house is falling,  
The beaten men come into their own."*

"Speak your word," said the guard at the gate;  
"Yes, but bear it to Cæsar straight,  
Say, 'Your murderer's knives are honing,  
Your killer's gang is lying in wait.'"

"Out of the wind that is blowing and moaning,  
Through the city palace and the country loaning,  
I cry, 'For the world's sake, Cæsar, beware,  
And take this warning as my atoning."

"Beware of the Court, of the palace stair,  
Of the downcast friend who speaks so fair,  
Keep from the Senate, for Death is going  
On many men's feet to meet you there."

"I, who am dead, have ways of knowing  
Of the crop of death that the quick are sowing.  
I, who was Pompey, cry it aloud  
From the dark of death, from the wind blowing."

"I, who was Pompey, once was proud,  
Now I lie in the sand without a shroud;  
I cry to Cæsar out of my pain,  
'Cæsar, beware, your death is vowed.'"

The light grew grey on the window-pane,  
 The windcocks swung in a burst of rain,  
 'The window of Cæsar flung unshuttered,  
 The horse-hoofs died into wind again.

*Cæsar turned in his bed and muttered,  
 With a struggle for breath the lamp-flame guttered:  
 Calpurnia heard her husband moan:*

*"The house is falling,  
 The beaten men come into their own."*

### THE BUILDERS

BEFORE the unseen cock had called the time,  
 Those workers left their beds and stumbled out  
 Into the street, where dust lay white as lime  
 Under the last star that keeps bats about.  
 Then blinking still from bed, they trod the street,  
 The doors closed up and down; the traveller heard  
 Doors opened, closed, then silence, then men's feet  
 Moving to toil, the men too drowsed for word.  
 The bean-field was a greyness as they passed,  
 The darkness of the hedge was starred with flowers.  
 The moth, with wings like dead leaves, sucked his last,  
 The triumphing cock cried out with all his powers;  
 His fire of crying made the twilight quick,  
 Then clink, clink, clink, men's trowels tapped the brick.

\* \* \* \* \*

I saw the delicate man who built the tower  
 Look from the turret at the ground below.  
 The granite column wavered like a flower,  
 But stood in air whatever winds might blow.  
 Its roots were in the rock, its head stood proud,  
 No earthly forest reared a head so high;  
 Sometimes the eagle came there, sometimes cloud,  
 It was man's ultimate footstep to the sky.  
 And in that peak the builder kept his treasure,  
 Books with the symbols of his art, the signs  
 Of knowledge in excitement, skill in pleasure,  
 The edge that cut, the rule that kept, the line.  
 He who had seen his tower beneath the grass,  
 Rock in the earth, now smiled, because it was.

\* \* \* \* \*

How many thousand men had done his will,  
Men who had hands, or arms, or strength to spend,  
Or cunning with machines, or art, or skill,  
All had obeyed him, working to this end.  
Hundreds in distant lands had given their share  
Of power, to deck it; on its every stone  
Their oddity of pleasure was laid bare,  
Yet was the tower his offspring, his alone.  
His inner eye had seen, his will had made it,  
All the opposing army of men's minds  
Had bowed, had turned, had striven as he bade it,  
Each to his purpose in their myriad kinds.  
Now it was done, and in the peak he stood  
Seeing his work, and smiled to find it good.

It had been stone, earth's body, hidden deep,  
Lightless and shapeless, where it cooled and hardened,  
Now it was as the banner on man's keep  
Or as the Apple in Eden where God gardened.  
Lilies of stone ran round it, and like fires  
The tongues of crockets shot from it and paused,  
Horsemen who raced were carved on't, the spires  
Were bright with gold; all this the builder caused  
And standing there, it seemed that all the hive  
Of human skills which now it had become,  
Was stone no more, nor building, but alive,  
Trying to speak, this tower that was dumb.  
Trying to speak, nay, speaking, soul to soul  
With powers who are, to raven or control.

### THE SETTING OF THE WINDCOCK

THE dust lay white upon the chisel-marks,  
The beams still shewed the dimplings of the grain,  
Above the chancel's gloom the crimson sparks  
Of Christ's blood glowed upon the window-pane.  
No brass or marble of a death was there,  
The painted angels on the wall whirled down  
Trumpeting to man's spirit everywhere,  
The spire topped the bell-tower like a crown.

## THE SETTING OF THE WINDCOCK 615

Now, on the tower-top, where the crockets ceased  
Like lace against the sky, they set at pause  
The golden wind-vane, that from west to east  
Would turn his beak to tempests or to flaws.  
It poised, it swung, it breasted the wind's stream,  
The work was done, the hands had wrought the dream.

### THE RACER ✓

I saw the racer coming to the jump,  
Staring with fiery eyeballs as he rushed,  
I heard the blood within his body thump,  
I saw him launch, I heard the toppings crushed.

And as he landed I beheld his soul  
Kindle, because, in front, he saw the Straight  
With all its thousands roaring at the goal,  
He laughed, he took the moment for his mate.

Would that the passionate moods on which we ride  
Might kindle thus to oneness with the will;  
Would we might see the end to which we stride,  
And feel, not strain, in struggle, only thrill.

And laugh like him and know in all our nerves  
Beauty, the spirit, scattering dust and turves.

### THE EYE AND THE OBJECT

When soul's companion fails,  
When flesh (that neighed once) ails,  
When body shortens sails,

O soul, break through the netting  
Of failing and forgetting,  
See clearer for sun-setting;

See clearer, and be cheerly,  
See thou the image clearly,  
Love thou the image dearly.

For out of love and seeing  
Beauty herself has being,  
    Beauty our queen;  
Who with calm spirit guards us  
And with dear love rewards us  
    In courts for ever green.

*From*  
**SARD HARKER**

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## THE PATHFINDER

She lies at grace, at anchor, head to tide,  
 The wind blows by in vain: she lets it be.  
 Gurgles of water run along her side,  
 She does not heed them: they are not the sea.  
 She is at peace from all her wandering now,  
 Quiet is in the very bones of her:  
 The glad thrust of the leaning of her bow  
 Blows bubbles from the cbb but does not stir.

Rust stains her side, her sails are furled, the smoke  
 Streams from her galley funnel and is gone;  
 A gull is settled on her skysail truck.  
 Some dingy seamen, by her deckhouse, joke;  
 The river loiters by her with its muck,  
 And takes her image as a benison.

\* \* \* \* \*

How shall a man describe this resting ship,  
 Her heavenly power of lying down at grace,  
 This quiet bird by whom the bubbles slip,  
 This iron home where prisoned seamen pace?  
 Three slenderest pinnacles, three sloping spires,  
 Climbing the sky, supported but by strings  
 Which whine in the sea wind from all their wires,  
 Yet stand the strain however hard it dings.  
 Then, underneath, the long lean fiery sweep  
 Of a proud hull exulting in her sheer,  
 That rushes like a diver to the leap,  
 And is all beauty without spot or peer.  
 Built on the Clyde, by men, of strips of steel  
 That once was ore trod by the asses' heel.

A Clyde-built ship of fifteen hundred tons,  
 Black-sided, with a tier of painted ports,  
 Red lead just showing where the water runs,  
 Her bow a leaping grace where beauty sports.  
 Keen as a hawk above the water line  
 Though full below it: an elliptic stern:  
 Her attitude a racer's, stripped and fine,  
 Tense to be rushing under spires that yearn.

She crosses a main skysail: her jibboom  
Is one steel spike: her mainsail has a spread  
Of eighty-seven feet, earring to earring.  
Her wind is a fresh gale, her joy careering  
Some two points free before it, nought ahead  
But sea, and the gale ~~soaring~~, and blown spume.

*From*  
MIDSUMMER NIGHT  
AND OTHER TALES IN VERSE



## THE TAKING OF MORGAUSE

MORGAUSE the Merry played beside the burn:  
The otter said: "Go home: return, return."

But no; she wandered down to the seaside;  
"Go home, O little friend," the gannets cried.

But no; she strayed to Erbin heaping wrack:  
"Morgause," he said, "beware, my dear; turn back."

But no; she laughed, and ran along the beach:  
Blind Erbin cried: "Come back, dear, I beseech."

She ran with naked feet in the bright foam:  
The shepherd on the cliff-top called "Go home."

But no, she did not hear, or could not care.  
The little vixen stopped her with "Beware . . ."

Beyond this jutting headland, drawn to land,  
A pirate's Drake-Ship lies upon the sand.

There, filling water, is the pirate's crew . . .  
Beware, lest, with the water, they take you."

But no, she heard the sweet-voiced pirates sing,  
Filling their earthen breakers at the spring.

Above the cuckoos and the bees of June,  
She heard the voices at the ancient tune:—

"My spear will feed me with another's bread,  
House me, where once another laid his head,  
And bride me with the girl another wed.

“Farewell, you women all, that once were dear;  
Lovely is love, but warring makes more near  
The man beside me with a fellow spear.”

Then little Morgause longed to see and know  
These dreaded pirates who were singing so.

She thought: “One little peep among the fern  
To say I’ve seen them, then I will return.”

But as she went, the black-backed adder cried:  
“You tread the road to trouble; turn aside.”

The blunt-tailed field-mouse called with shrilly shrieks:  
“Beware of iron claws and horny beaks.”

Then the red robin, hopping, twittered: “Flee . . .  
Those men are wicked, they flung stones at me.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, as she crouched among the grasses’ stalks,  
She saw the Drake-Ship on the roller-balks.

She was red-painted with a sweeping run,  
Rowlocked for twelve, with shields for everyone.

A gilded Dragon eyed the way she went,  
Aft, were Thor’s Hammer and a scarlet tent.

Below the cataract that leapt the rock  
The gold-ringed pirates filled their water-stock.

They filled red earthen jars: their King stood near  
Whetting the deadly edges of a spear.

He was a young man, smiling, with black eyes;  
In all a pirate’s wisdom he was wise.

He wore a scarlet cloak above a mail  
Of shining silver wrought like salmon-scale.

He eyed the grass where little Morgause lay,  
But did not seem to see: he looked away.

He ceased the whetting of his weapon: then  
He watched the work and chatted with his men.

At flood, he bade them run the Dragon down  
To sea, across the beach-wrack tumbled brown.

They ran her seaward, crying "Heave" and "Hale";  
'Now,' (little Morgause thought) 'I'll see her sail.'

\* \* \* \* \*

They hoisted her red sail, singing to the pull  
A song which Morgause thought most beautiful.

The red sail filled and jangled; the calm sea  
Lifted and lapsed the vessel not yet free.

The wading pirates loaded her with stores,  
Unlashed the steering, shipped the rowing oars.

'There,' (Morgause thought) 'they are about to go,  
And I, alone, of all the castle, know . . .

I shall return and tell them: "Look at me . . .  
I saw the pirates whom you did not see.

They could not see me hidden in the flowers,  
But there I snuggled, watching them for hours.

I was as near as you are to the King,  
I heard him tell his boatswain what to sing.

He never saw me, but he came so near,  
I could have touched him with a hunting-spear.

Now, after this, I'll wander where I choose,  
And when I wish to, nor shall you refuse.' "

\* \* \* \* \*

So Morgause thought, but now the Dragon's sheets  
Were homed; the after rowers took their seats;

The moorings slacked; the silver-harnessed lord  
Spoke to two seamen as he climbed aboard.



## 626 THE TAKING OF MORGAUSE

The two men trotted inland: a call blew  
Shrill, as the captain passed among his crew.

The oars were tosst together and let fall  
Into the rowlocks at the "Ready all."

\* \* \* \* \*

'Now,' (Morgause thought) 'they go away, away,  
Oar-blades green-swirling, Dragon spouting spray;

Would I could go with them, to see and know  
Where all the setting suns and planets go;

To hear the Mermaids singing, and to see  
The spicy Phœnix in her burning tree;

And all the golden Apples that the Snake  
Guards, lest the neighing Centaurs come to take;

And that dim Valley of the silver corn  
Browsed in the moonlight by the Unicorn;

O would I could . . .' And suddenly she felt  
Two pirates grip her grimly as she knelt.

\* \* \* \* \*

King Lot, the silver-scaled, said "By-and-by,  
When you are wiser, you will make a spy . . .

Meanwhile, my Morgause, you shall come with me  
Over the thoughtless, ship-destroying sea,

North, to my Orkney kingdom's granite tower;  
In that grim garden you shall be the flower."

\* \* \* \* \*

Thither she went: within that stony place  
She grew to loveliness of form and face.

And when the seasons made her seventeen,  
King Lot of Orkney took her as his Queen.

## BADON HILL

LOKI the Dragon Killer mustered men  
To harry through the western isles agen.

Five thousand raiders in a hundred ships  
Sailed with him to put Britain in eclipse.

For many days they loitered to the south,  
Pausing to raid at every river-mouth.

Always they met good fortune and good reive.  
Kol, with his pirates, joined them in the Sleeve.

They sacked the Roman seaport: they laid bare  
Down to its plinth, the marble-covered phare.

Then, growing bold, they sacked Augusta town.  
Temples of many gods came crashing down.

Then Loki said, "My grand-dad, in his prime,  
Burned a great city into building lime.

Upstream it was and many miles from here.  
No man has harried there this many a year.

Then, as his gang dissolved, he went alone  
Upstream from there, exploring the unknown,

And reached a reed-mere, whence a trackway led  
Up to an ancient fort called Badon Head.

And looking thence (he said) beheld what we  
Dream of perhaps but very seldom see:—

Sway-footed cows in thousands, deep in grass,  
Unraided reiving such as never was,

And distant downland stretching, green with keep,  
White as its chalk with moving flocks of sheep.

He swore to raid there with a gang, but Fate  
That loves but ruins boldness, shut the gate . . .

Ambrose the Briton maimed him with a spear  
So that he lingered helpless many a year

And never came to keep his oath, nor saw  
That land again, that pasture without flaw;

Nor did his son, my father: no one has;  
Unraided lie those pastures of deep grass.

Now I will raid them: you and I, my spears,  
Will make the greatest raid of fifty years.

We will go up the river, we will take  
That land and sack it for my grand-dad's sake."

"Right," Wolf the Red Fang said. "But people tell  
Those Westers' leader is a cub of hell.

Arthur, they call him: people get their fill  
Coming for cattle against Arthur's will."

"Arthur to Hell," said Loki; "I shall go."

"Right," Red Fang answered; "I have warned you though."

Upstream they rowed their Dragons: on the banks  
The horsemen scouted, keeping clear their flanks.

O'er many a mudbank jammed with rotting drift  
The harnessed horses gave the ships a lift.

After some days, King Loki trod the wracked  
Shell of the city that his grand-dad sacked;

Then on he passed, now poling, now with oars,  
Now dragged by horse-teams straining on the shores,

Now sailing, till he sailed into the green  
Reed-shadowed mere his ancestor had seen.

There was the trackway, there the Badon Hill  
Notched on the skyline by its rampart still.

"This is the place," said Loki. "Here we'll drive  
Those sway-foot cattle to the ships alive."

He moored his ships and marched his men ashore.  
He eyed those pastures of his ancestor.

No herd, no head, was in those miles of grass.  
The fields were empty as the downland was.

No smoke from any house, no noise of men,  
Empty the cottage as the cattle-pen.

King Loki pitched his awnings in the camp,  
And bade his men new-palisade the ramp.

He said to Wolf the Red Fang, "Mount and scout  
West, with the horse, to seek the cattle out."

"Right," Wolf the Red Fang said. "But Arthur calls  
All cattle in, and shuts it within walls,

Soon as he hears of wolf-packs near the house.  
Mounting and scouting will not bring you cows."

"Mount," Loki said. "I do not ask advice."

"Right," the Wolf answered. "Now I've warned you twice."

Wolf Red Fang took the horse into the west,  
Over green pastures better than the best.

Green though the pastures were, that summer land  
Was bare of people as a desert sand.

No scout of all his raiding horsemen heard  
Voice of aught living save the summer bird.

Nothing was heard by them, and nothing seen  
Save summer blue above the summer green.

Nothing but summer greenness stretching on  
Marked by the tracks by which the herds had gone.

"Where have they gone?" they murmured. "We have come.  
Heel-scenting, sure, or we'd have met with some."

And others said. "We must be under curse.  
Let's back to camp before we meet with worse."

But Wolf replied, "A man who won't believe  
Has got to learn: come, ride ahead and reive."

The sun declined, the misty west grew red,  
But still no cattle, not a single head.

The dusk grew dim: they trembled as they rode,  
For no dog barked at all, and no light showed.

At star-time they unsaddled for the night  
Beside a chalk-brook, water-crowfoot-white.

They did not help again in Loki's plan,  
Arthur at dawn destroyed them to a man.

Arthur pushed onward: before dawn next day  
He eyed the reed-mere where the longships lay;

Those servants of the water-spooning oar  
Lay flank to flank, their noses from the shore.

Their pine-plank, painted red, the hot July  
Had burned to be like bonework, blister dry.

Up in the pirate's camp no watch was kept,  
Drunk Kol was dicing, drunken Loki slept.

Arthur and Lancelot the son of Ban  
Took burning touchwood in an iron pan;

'They slid into the water among reed,  
No pirate saw their coming, none gave heed.

They pushed their gear before them on a raft,  
The ripples spread in little gleams that laughed.

The weather Dragon-ship rose overhead  
Like a house-pale, sun-blistered, painted red.

Arthur and Lancelot together smeared  
Tar to the leadings whence her hawsers veered,

Then heaping twigs and pine-cones, they gave touch,  
And blew, until the little flames took clutch.

No watcher heard or saw them, no one came.  
The little flame became a bigger flame.

It spread along the seams and thrust its tongues  
Out, till the straikings looked like ladder-rungs.

First, the wind bowed it down, then, at a gust  
The flame, that had been greedy, became lust;

And like a wave that lifts against a rock  
Up, into shattering shining at the shock,

So it upshattered into spangs of flame  
That writhelled red, and settled, and laid claim

And tore the Dragon's planking from her bones  
Roaring: the Dragon sighed with little moans.

Now swearing pirates ran to fight the flame  
And Arthur's archers shot them as they came.

And Loki, rising from his drunken swoen,  
Saw all his longships blazing red to heaven

And Arthur's army coming with a will  
Straight from the fire up the Badon Hill.

All Britons know the stories that are told  
Of Arthur's battle for that pirates' hold:—

How first he tried the flank, and failed, and then  
Tried at the gate and was repulsed agen;

How at the broken stakes where flints were flying,  
He burst a way among the dead and dying,

And held the gap, the while his meyny all  
Shovelled and picked, to totter down the wall;

How Loki charged and beat him headlong thence  
With pirates in a spear-gang matted dense;

How Lancelot and Hector and Gawaine  
Routed the spears and bore him back again;

And how they beat a little breach and stood  
Crouched under lifted shields to make it good;

While from the upper wall about their ears  
Came flying flints and fire, darts and spears.

And how that lower ditch was filled with dead  
Men taking death there like their daily bread.

How Loki, growing anxious, strove to cut  
His passage out but had his pathway shut;

How thrice he tried, with three defeats, and each  
Time found him fewer, with a bigger breach.

Then how, like wolves entrapped, those pirates raged,  
Horseless, without a navy, foodless, caged.

With Loki sorely wounded and Kol killed.  
Men also tell how Arthur's fifers thrilled

Along his front, in that late afternoon,  
While all his army, in a demi-lune,

Trod to that *fifing* up the slope and stayed;  
And how the trumpets all together brayed

Along the front, and all the army swarmed  
Upward together, till the wall was stormed;

Till, on the crest, beyond the tumbled pales,  
They saw all-glorious Fortune turn her scales;

And how the horse came thrusting to the wrench,  
Trampling the rampart fallen in the trench;

And how the trumpets all together blew,  
And Arthur's army charged and overthrew.

Under the grasses where the cattle browse,  
King Loki's army keep eternal house

In Badon earth, for none escaped alive.  
Thereafter Arthur's realm was free to thrive.

For many years, no pirates had the will  
To band against him, after Badon Hill.

### ARTHUR AND HIS RING

BEAUTY'S Delight, the Princess Gwenivere,  
The day she promised marriage to the King  
Drew from her hand the gem she held most dear,  
Kissed it, to Arthur gave,  
Saying, "O love, I plight me with this ring,  
This sapphire, my most precious marvellous thing."  
Her hair was in it, red as corn in ear.  
"This," Arthur said, "I'll carry to my grave."

And being filled with joy, he went to thank  
The goddess Venus who had blest his love.  
Her image stood before a marble tank  
In which, in glittering falls,  
A fountain sprinkled water-rings that clove  
The shadows of the temple myrtle-grove;  
There her bright-breasted pigeons preened and drank,  
Sliding and ruckling ever with douce calls.



In marble was the goddess, fashioned well,  
Yearning a little forward as she stared;  
Men thought her holy bosom rose and fell;  
Her robe drooped to her hip,  
Fallen in folds, while all above was bared . . .  
The myrtle shadows and the water fared  
Into the pool before her, there to dwell  
With the statue's shadow for companionship.

And Arthur, passing, saw his shadow pass  
Along that water on the imaged sky  
Wherein the evening planet's glitter was.  
He reached the shape of stone,  
Love's very Queen who gives the victory;  
He saw her sweet, proud face, her steadfast eye,  
Her crown that gleamed, like glow-worms among grass,  
Her left hand stretched, her right hand at her zone.

"O lovely Queen," he cried, "to whom all hearts  
That ever suffered Love's intensest ache,  
Turn with most passionate crying from all parts,  
Take now my thanks, most sweet;  
All my heart's deepest thankfulnesses take,  
Because, to-day, thy Loveliness didst make  
Me, thy poor servant, healed from many smarts  
By granted love;" he bent and kissed her feet.

And as he kissed, he felt the marble thrill  
As though alive; he felt her garment stir;  
Her awful beauty made his heart stand still;  
His spirit understood  
The cryings of the birds attending her;  
Light beat upon him, and the smell of myrrh;  
Ecstasy rapt him to a greater will;  
A peace that burnt like fire, a pain most good.

"O goddess, risen from the sea," he cried,  
"Grant that this ring which my beloved gave  
May touch your finger and be sanctified;  
And make my love endure  
Like to the mountain, not the breaking wave;  
Make it my star to shine beyond the grave.  
O rose, whom men adore in every bride,  
Grant me this boon, most beautiful, most pure.

Behold the ring." At this, he tendered it  
To Venus' self, and with his gentlest touch  
Upon her outstretched finger made it fit . . .  
But to his utmost awe,  
The finger bent to take the ring in clutch;  
Then, instantly, his ecstasy was such  
That the green leaf was speaking to his wit  
And the gold glow-worm telling him his law.

He felt the goddess' hand caress his head;  
He heard the music that the planets sing;  
Strange flowers fell upon him, scarlet-red,  
And glow-worms gleaming green . . .  
Yet in the midmost of his joy, the King  
Still strove amidst it all to take the ring,  
But, lo, it clipped the hand that never bled,  
Merged to the finger of the marble Queen.

And as his fingers plucked, the glory went;  
The twilight's wind was in the myrtle grove,  
Rattling the leaves and killing all the scent;  
The goddess was but stone,  
A marble thing to which his jewel clove;  
He wrested at it, but it would not move,  
It could not move, the finger being bent,  
The goddess meant to keep it for her own.

Even with unguents, even when he smeared  
Finger and ring with oil, the gem remained  
Fast on the stone; until King Arthur feared  
That it was lost indeed.

"And yet," he murmured, "if the stone were planed,  
By some good craftsman when to-night has waned,  
Then, without any doubt it could be cleared."  
He went to bed, praying that dawn might speed.

But being abed, the midnight glowed with fire.  
There, standing radiant in her crescent moon,  
Was Venus' self, the Granter of Desire,  
The Hope forever green.

Her quire of lovebirds carolled all in tune,  
Her laughing eyes were glowing like the moon,  
Joy was her gift and beauty her attire.

"Arthur," she said, "will you not take your Queen?"

For I am yours, you wedded me this night;  
Take me, beloved: I was never won  
Before by mortal man beneath the light,  
But I am won by you."

Then Arthur cried, "O creature of the sun,  
Have pity on me, O immortal one,  
Give back the jewel that my lover plight,  
It is Queen Gwenivere's and I am true."

"Behold it, set upon my hand," she said;  
"You placed it there with many words of love;  
Though I am deathless, do not be afraid,  
I am your wedded wife."

"O lady, no," he cried. "By heaven above,  
By you, the Blesser and by judging Jove,  
My love is Gwenivere, the royal maid,  
I neither wooed nor wed you, on my life."

Her crescent moon dimmed down, her eyes seemed stone,  
Her scarlet lovebirds dimmed and ceased to sing;  
He heard the bloodhounds in the courtyard moan.

"So, Arthur, you deny  
Me, the immortal, you an earthly King.  
God has your words recorded, I your ring."  
The goddess said: "But she whom you disown  
Will come again." She dimmed into the sky.

All day he urged his craftsmen, one by one,  
To break away the ring; but all from fear  
Of goddess or of priest, refused, and none  
Would lift a tool or hand.

Then as he sorrowed in the midnight drear,  
His bloodhounds whimpered like a stricken steer,  
Venus again came shining like the sun,  
With eyes not glad, but gleaming like a brand.

"Arthur," she said: "Behold your Queen again : : .  
I come out of the brightness of the sky  
To seek my husband; must it be in vain?"

Then he, in sore distress,  
Said: "Queen, return the jewel. I deny  
I ever gave, or thought of giving. I . . .  
Goddess, take pity on a mortal's pain."

"So," she said, "twice you spurn my happiness.

Be wise in time, my Arthur, and beware  
A third denial." Then, with dimming light,  
She faded from the room and left him there  
Shaken at loss and threat.

Unhappy dreams tormented him all night,  
Hell-hounds, with yellow eyes and fang-teeth white,  
Trotted about his bed with the night-mare.  
He rose like one well taken in a net.

And looking at the quay below his tower,  
He saw a stranger landing from a ship;  
A dark, fierce man, with bright eyes full of power  
Blazing beneath a hood . . .

One swift and telling as a cutting whip,  
Keen, with a King's decision on his lip.  
He smiled on Arthur; Arthur toiled an hour,  
Then sought the garden where the statue stood.

And lo, a curse, had fallen: fungus grew  
Over the goddess in a lace of green;  
No sparrows chirruped nor did pigeons coo,  
And mat-weed choked the tank.  
The smell of dying made the place unclean,  
All withered were the myrtles of the Queen.  
"This cannot be the garden that I knew,"  
King Arthur thought, and yet his spirit sank.

"Alas," he muttered, "I have brought a curse  
Through scorning of the goddess in the night."  
Yet in Apollo's House the wreck was worse;  
Jove's House was in decay,  
The altars bloodless without gift or rite:  
No sweet blue incense-smoke, no votive light,  
The golden serpents broken from the thyrses,  
And no one there to sacrifice or pray.

No pine torch streamed to Mars in tongues of flame,  
The Sanctuary of the Sun was shut,  
And in the Moon's House kittens were at game:  
To Mercury no oil  
Poured, and to Saturn was no offering put,  
Vine-prunings, milk, or cornshoots newly-cut;  
No woman called aloud on Juno's name,  
Nor brought her wool, or balm, or household spoil.

And no man was at work at field or craft,  
Nor loitering in the market or the lanes,  
No hawkers cried, no children screamed or laughed,  
No woman tended stall:  
The world seemed weary of its fight for gains,  
Its daily battle with its daily pains,  
Its daily acquiescence in the daft;  
A strange awakening had come to all.

But turning tow'ards a lifted voice he heard,  
He found them in the circus at the gates,  
Intently listening to a teacher's word.  
That same fierce foreign man,  
Whom he had seen on quayside midst the freights,  
Was speaking to them about life and fates.  
His spirit quelled them like the eagle-bird,  
The hearers trembled as his message ran.

And when he ceased, those tremblers rose as one,  
Eyeing each other for a man to lead;  
Then, at a word, they all began to run  
Towards the city gate,  
Crying, "Destroy the idols, the whole breed . . .  
Destroy these statues of the devil's seed!"  
Then household idols from their niches spun  
Crashing: the stranger bade King Arthur wait.

"Arthur," he said, "I see you have a grief  
Tormenting to your spirit: lay it bare."  
Then, having heard, he said: "I bring relief;  
Their strength begins to fail.  
They are but erring thoughts and empty air,  
Though some of them are strong and other fair.  
My Master is the Master of their chief;  
Trust to my Master, for his words avail.

But, hark. 'To-night, at midnight, you must go  
Out of the city to that open space  
Where the three highways all together flow  
Before the bridge-gate fort.  
You know the spot, it is an evil place:  
Blood-sodden spirits haunt there without grace.  
Natheless, go boldly, for ere cocks shall crow,  
Their King will travel thither with his court.

Go to that Sovereign and demand your ring  
Before he pass the gateway with his crew;  
Many and deadly evils do they bring . . .  
My Master be your guide.  
Ask for that stolen sapphire as your due  
And do not blench nor quaver: if you do,  
Then truly it will be an evil thing;  
But to the valiant nothing is denied."

\* \* \* \* \*

At midnight Arthur crept outside the gate  
Over the causeway to the river bank,  
There where the bridge-head tower rose up great  
Above three meeting roads.  
A fire-basket swung there from a crank,  
Lighting the river-ripples rank on rank;  
Nothing was there but darkness full of fate  
And spirits without pardon or abodes.

And Arthur, standing at the meeting ways,  
Lit by the fire swinging from the tower,  
Heard voices crying in a meteor-blaze  
That streamed across the air.  
One voice was calling: "They have had their hour!"  
Then one: "All changes, even Beauty and Power."  
Then one: "Eternity has many days . . .  
The things that will be are the things that were."

Then from the city, horses' clattering feet,  
Trotting upon the causeway, swiftly neared . . .  
There came an old King, in a winding sheet,  
Whose gemless crown was lead.  
Long-boned was he, sunk-eyed, with scanty beard,  
Old beyond human telling, bowed and sered,  
Tapping the ass he rode with ancient wheat  
That, like a sceptre, dreary lustre shed.

And after him, on horseback, came a crew  
Of figures, wrapped in cloaks inscribed with signs,  
Each tended by the symbol creature due,  
The eagle and the pard,

The wolf, the peacock and the stag with tines,  
The ox, the goat, the hedgehog with his spines:  
The last was one whose looking almost slew,  
Who bore no symbol but a broken shard.

Then Arthur, catching at the donkey's rein,  
Challenged the Sovereign as the priest had told,  
Saying, "O Saturn, give my ring again!"  
Then Saturn slowly spake.

"I, ageless, am most aged: I was old  
Ere first a lichen sprouted upon mould,  
And now I meet a man who prefers pain  
On earth to bliss such as immortals take.

Accept your lesser fortune: take your gem."  
Then, with a sudden waft of holy scent,  
That loveliest flower of the immortal stem,  
Venus herself, the Queen,  
To Arthur from her golden saddle leant.  
"Take back the troth-plight that you never meant,"  
She said, and gave it. "Think not I condemn.  
In exile I shall keep your memory green.

We pass to exile, you to reap your sowing,  
We to the violet fields, you to your end,  
We into peace and you to ebb and flowing;  
But when the Fate cuts short,  
When life has no more penny left to spend,  
When Will no longer makes your elbow bend,  
Then, from my sea, O Love, I will come rowing,  
My Queens and I, to bring you into port.

And now, farewell." And, as she spoke, a cock  
Crowed from the gateway tower; the brazen gate  
Jarred, rolling open at King Saturn's knock;  
And all the glimmering crowd  
Rode slowly through, those forces of no date:  
Last went the Death that held the broken fate.  
Then Arthur, stunned, recovering from his shock,  
Kissed his beloved's ring and sang aloud.

## THE FIGHT ON THE WALL

MODRED was in the Water Tower  
 At Caerleon-on-Usk,  
 He saw Queen Gwenivere the flower  
 Go by at dusk.

She was disguised, but Modred knew her,  
 No cloak could veil such grace:  
 She was Queen Gwenivere: what drew her  
 To such a place?

She passed beneath the phare new-lighted,  
 He spied a red-gold tress  
 And gems upon a hand that righted  
 The wind-blown dress.

"Aha," he said, "my golden plover . . .  
 What go you out to do?  
 Queen, you are going to your lover;  
 I will go, too."

He dogged her through the unbuilt quarter,  
 Past heaps of brick and slate,  
 Scantlings and smoking lime and mortar,  
 To the East Gate.

Behind the East Gate turret-curtain  
 A rushlight flickered dim.  
 "Lancelot's room," he said; "it's certain  
 She goes to him."

He crouched behind her as she listened  
 And watched, to know all clear.  
 He thought: "You think it safe. It isn't . . .  
 Go on, my dear."

Then with a little clink, her sandal  
 Trod on the East Gate stair . . .  
 At turret-door one held a candle,  
 Her Knight was there.



"Lancelot," Modred said. "We take him;  
His golden Queen and he;  
Arthur will burn the slut and break him.  
What joy for me."

Back to the palace Modred fareth  
And there he finds Gawaine,  
With's brothers Gaheris and Gareth  
And Agravaine.

When Agravaine had learned the matter,  
He said: "Knights, hearken here:  
You thought my charges wicked chatter  
Of Gwenivere.

Now she is trulling with her master,  
That Lancelot of fame,  
This spotless Queen of Alabaster . . .  
It is a shame . . .

It is a shame to them who do it  
And worse to us who see.  
I say, tell Arthur: let them rue it.  
Do you agree?"

Then Gawaine said: "Be silent, brother,  
And move no more in this:  
Leave evil-speaking to another,  
Leave it as 'tis."

Gareth and Gaheris replying  
Said: "We will take no part  
In dirty treacheries and spying  
Foul as your heart."

"But I," Sir Modred answered sour,  
"I will make one with you.  
Arthur shall know within the hour  
About these two.

You dainty Knights of spotless honour  
May watch your Queen's disgrace,  
But we will bring a judgment on her  
And brand her face.

And Lancelot, that peer of traitors,  
Shall be a public show."

Gawaine said: "You accursèd hater  
About it: go.

But know, that what you do will issue  
In every grief made worse.  
The present world of men will hiss you,  
The future curse."

Gawaine and's brothers left in anger:  
King Arthur entered in.  
Modred said: "Take your Queen and hang her,  
She lives in sin.

She trulls with Lancelot the splendid  
Atop the East Gate stair;  
Attack them now and they'll be ended,  
Caught unaware."

"If it be so," said Arthur, "surely  
The pair of them shall die.  
Take men and bind the two securely."  
Modred said "Ay."

Modred took Kolgrevice and's brothers  
Kurslin and Petipase,  
Galleron, Joure and seven others,  
They went their ways . . .

They crosst the city's narrow alleys,  
Now dark, the shops being shut;  
They heard the night-wind in the salleys,  
The fox in rut:

They heard the screech-owl at his calling  
That charms the wood-mouse' ears,  
And the tinkle of the water falling  
At the bridge piers.

Soon they were near the East Gate tower;  
A small light showed aloft.  
"See," Modred said, "they're in our power:  
Now creep in soft.

There's where the deer lies in her cover,  
The red stag keeping guard:  
Now we shall take her with her lover.  
Bind them both hard."

They tiptoed up the winding stairway,  
But Modred tiptoed last.  
The jackdaw in the archer's airway  
Blinked as they passed.

They crept out on the paven landing  
Atop the city wall.  
It had a parapet and banding  
Lest men should fall.

Between these ridges ran the footing  
To where the tower rose;  
The East Gate flanking-tower for shooting,  
Loopholed for bows.

Thither they crept and stood there, straining  
Their ears at the barred door:  
The wind-cock up above complaining,  
Creaked and gave o'er.

A silence was within the tower,  
Naught touched on wood or stone;  
Joure whispered: "This may be the bower,  
The birds are flown."

They listened: then, within the hiding,  
Gwenivere's voice said: "No . . .  
It was the wind-cock spindle griding  
As the flaws blow . . ."

Lancelot answered: "Not the spindle . . .  
No; but another sound."  
The listeners felt their spirits kindle,  
The game was found.

Then beating on the door in fury,  
They cried: "You traitor Knight!  
You are taken now. We're judge and jury,  
Come out and fight.

Come out!" and at the panels rashing  
 They strove to beat a way,  
 As through the scrum a pack goes crashing  
 In football play.

The door held to its bolts, being oaken.  
 "Come out," the dozen cried.  
 They rashed again: no bolts were broken,  
 No hinges wried.

Gwenivere whispered to her lover:  
 "Alas, we both are lost."  
 Lancelot had no arms nor cover,  
 A cloak at most.

"Alas, my Queen," Lancelot muttered,  
 "That I should die thus tamed;  
 Snuffed, like a candle that has guttered,  
 Leaving you shamed."

The arm-chest in the chamber angle  
 Was bare of points and blades,  
 He had two hands with which to strangle:  
 No other aids.

"Come out," the dozen cried: "No quarter  
 If we are forced to storm."  
 "Go, Joure," said Modred, "to the dorter . .  
 Bring up a form . . .

We're bringing up a form to batter  
 The door about your ears . . .  
 We'll have your head upon a platter,  
 My prince, sans peers.

And you, my red-haired queen, your trollop,  
 Let you make no mistake,  
 Shall go in smock like a cook's collop  
 To burn at stake."

Lancelot said: "This filthy crying  
 Is more than I can stand:  
 Better than hearing this were dying  
 Death out of hand.

O Queen," he said, "the times are over  
That you and I have known.  
Belovèd Queen, I am your lover,  
Body and bone,

Spirit and all of me, past knowing,  
Most beautiful, though sin.  
Now the old lovely days are going  
And bad begin.

I shall die here, but whatsoever  
May come of me, my friends  
Will stand to succour you forever  
Until life ends.

Farewell, beloved beauty peerless,  
My star since I began;  
You were my light when life was cheerless,  
You made me man.

In many a foray, many a stour,  
In many a deathly place,  
Your thought has blessed me like a flower  
And given me grace.

Now would that I had arms upon me  
Until my powers fail,  
What I would do before they won me  
Would make a tale."

At this, the running twelve came battering  
Their form against the door,  
A panel yielded to the shattering,  
They staved two more . . .

They cried "Three more, and we shall take him,  
This captain of the King;  
Let this one hit the bolt and break him  
Together . . . Ding."

Lancelot said: "Give over knocking,  
I will unbar: let be . . .  
I will undo . . . I am not mocking . . .  
Come capture me."

He drew the bolt and opened to them  
And stared into the dark,  
By the thin taper's light he knew them  
All he could mark.

Even as wolf-hounds snarl and cower  
About the wolf at bay,  
Those shrank till Kolgrevice of Gower  
Leapt at his prey.

Kolgrevice shouted: "Now I have him,"  
And slashed, but the cut missed.  
Then Lancelot a buffet gave him  
With the clenched fist:

A brain-pan blow that laid him sprawling  
Dead on the turret floor:  
Lancelot, while the corpse was falling  
Bolted the door.

Bolted it just before the others  
Charged with their blows, too late.  
Lancelot said: "You misst me, brothers,  
Now you must wait."

Then as they beat the panels, railing  
Like dogs the stag has gored,  
Lancelot donned the corpse's mailing  
And took his sword.

Modred and Agravaine together  
Cried: "Out, you traitor, out."  
Lancelot answered: "Cease your blether;  
You need not shout.

Go from the door: I promise truly  
That if you go from here,  
Naming your place and hour, duly  
I will appear

Before the Court in judgment sitting  
Against what charge you bring  
I'll answer all, to my acquitting  
From him the King."

"Arthur has damned you both already,  
To death," Modred replied,  
"To death by us, and we are ready,  
So come outside."

"If that be so," he answered, "surely  
My portion is but hard.  
I warn you, keep yourselves securely" . . .  
Then he unbarred.

Then storming armoured from his prison  
He strode out to the wall.  
Since the man's death the moon had risen:  
He saw them all.

There was no room in that grim alley  
For more than two abreast.  
The meyny charged him at his sally,  
They smote his crest.

But ducking from their swords uplifted,  
He tackled those who led—  
Agravaine, Lot's son, called The Gifted,  
Lovel the Red.

Agravaine cried to those behind him:  
"Stand back, friends; give us room."  
He felt a sudden lightning blind him,  
He felt Death's doom;

Knew not how Lancelot had stricken,  
But felt the blow destroy  
The gifts that made his hearers quicken  
From calm to joy.

Stumbling, he saw bright waters gleaming  
With star-gleams spark on spark,  
Then he struck stone, then all was seeming,  
Then all was dark.

Before he clanged upon the paving,  
Lovel the Red was in,  
Crying: "Come, friends, he's ours past saving .  
Dic in your sin . . .

Die," and he struck, struck twice, but tamely,  
Being too near his mark.  
Lancelot, closing, gripped him gamely  
And struck him stark,

And swung him as a shield before him  
As guard to Kurslin's axe,  
Which struck Sir Lovel fair and tore him  
As cards tear flax.

Lovel fell back upon his slayer  
But Kurslin thrust him clear:  
He cried, "Where is this Queen's betrayer?  
I'll kill him here."

But Lovel's body made him stumble,  
And Lancelot cried: "Not so . . .  
I betray no one, friend, be humble,  
Get out, man . . . go."

And Lancelot struck him surely straightway  
Over the gangway wall,  
Down to the entrance of the gateway;  
Men heard the fall.

And at the crash the party wavered  
And fell back to the stair;  
Having four champions dead, they quavered;  
He watched them there.

Then Mador, of the White Rock Leaguer  
That guards the Wye Mouth Ford,  
Lured by the smile of death was eager  
And tossed his sword,

And cried: "Now, Lancelot, my brother,  
Have at you, with good heart,  
One of us two will kill the other  
Before we part.

Remember now our ancient quarrel  
About that pasture-right.  
Now one of us shall earn a laurel:  
Have at you . . . fight."



Then rushing as the wild boar rushes  
In some oak glade of Dean,  
He scored his gashes with his tushes  
So bitter keen.

Two slashes right and left made fire  
On Lancelot's armour bright:  
Lancelot's sword fell like a geier  
From heaven's height,

A geier, that aloft in heaven  
Stares at the sun unblind . . .  
Then plunges headlong like the leven  
Upon the hind:

So swept the broadsword from its eiry  
Shrieking to seek its own,  
Beating its port and clanging fiery  
Through steel, through bone,

Through marrow to the life, so sweeping  
Lancelot's smiting scored . . .  
And Mador's soul had done with keeping  
The swift Wye ford.

And Mador drooped and toppled over,  
That loud-voiced ward of Wye,  
To feed no more on the green clover  
The white-faced kye,

To hear no more sand-raddled Severn  
Pass out to sea in song,  
But fill a grass-plot at St. Keverne  
Not six feet long.

And seeing Mador dead, the seven  
Cried: "All together . . . now,  
Down with the traitor: help us heaven,  
Pull stroke, pull bow."

Petipase led their meyny shouting  
The cries of the sea host,  
He being a sailor tanned from scouting  
The Saxon coast.

He had a short axe poised for striking  
 Lancelot's skull apart,  
 Lancelot sent his sword-point spiking  
 Athwart his heart.

And leaping, Petipase remembered  
 The red sails of his ships,  
 Then he collapsed like one dismembered  
 And in eclipse.

But knew among the gleams and crying  
 Through which his soul was wrenched,  
 That other men than he were dying  
 And that they blenched.

For Lancelot, his point withdrawing,  
 Struck Florens with the edge  
 Over the brow, that he fell clawing  
 Against the ledge.

Then as Joure sprang, the great Knight quickly  
 So smote him with his shield,  
 That Joure's manhood was made sickly,  
 He drooped, he reeled.

And straight, before he fell, the ravage  
 Of the sharp sword-edge came  
 Swift as the coming of the savage  
 Who goes in flame.

And Joure fell and clanged in falling,  
 But heard before he died  
 The ring of the triumphant calling  
 Lancelot cried:

For as the shaken four were backing,  
 Lancelot cried his cry  
 That led like trumpets in attacking  
 To victory,

And charging as he cried, he drove them  
 Back to the winding stair,  
 Where two men making stand, he clove them,  
 Maelgon and Gare.

Then leaping down the steps pursuing,  
He cut down Galleron:  
But he who set the trouble brewing,  
Modred, was gone . . .

Gone screaming in his dread to cover  
Across the sleeping town.  
Lancelot turned him to his lover  
And sat him down.

Then after all that crash of warring  
Came silence, without thrill:  
Kolgrevice quiet on the flooring,  
The lovers still.

Outside, the city slept; the water  
Moaned at the bridge's piers,  
The moonlight blancht that place of slaughter,  
The dew dripped tears.

The white mist, from the river wreathing,  
Shrouded the river ground:  
But for the dew and the two breathing,  
There was no sound.

Gwenivere spoke at last: "O glory  
Of all Knights among men,  
This of to-night will be a story  
Not matched agen."

A silence followed in the tower  
Save for the Knight's deep breath.  
Horror had followed on the power  
Of dealing death.

By the dim flicker of the taper  
Sir Lancelot discerned  
How in her face as white as paper  
The Queen's eyes burned.

Deep in the panels of the walling  
He heard the death-tick knock,  
The dewdrops from the aspens falling  
Ticked like a clock.

Then in the convent tower a tolling  
Called nuns into the tower.  
Lancelot said: "Past man's controlling  
Are place and hour.

I had no quarrel with the meyny  
Nor did I know them all,  
But life is not at peace with any  
And her blows fall.

Now all our hours of joy together  
Are past, our share henceforth  
Will be but bitterness, with weather  
Out of the north.

This day, beginning in the quire  
Where now the ladies sing,  
Will make our glory of desire  
Another thing.

For I foresee the Kingdom breaking  
Asunder from all this:  
Out of the welter of man's making  
What must be is.

Here is the prelude to the story  
That leads us to the grave.  
So be it: we have had a glory  
Not many have.

Though what to-morrow may discover  
Be harsh to what has been,  
No matter, I am still your lover  
And you my queen."

## GWENIVERE TELLS

So Arthur passed, but country-folk believe  
He will return, to triumph and achieve;  
Men watch for him on each Midsummer Eve.

They watch in vain, for ere that night was sped,  
That ship reached Avalon with Arthur dead;  
I, Gwenivere, helped cere him, within lead.

I, Gwenivere, helped bury him in crypt,  
Under cold flagstones that the ringbolts shipped;  
The hangings waved, the yellow candles dripped.

Anon I made profession, and took vows  
As nun encloistered: I became Christ's spouse,  
At Amesbury, as Abbess to the house.

I changed my ermines for a goat-hair stole,  
I broke my beauty there, with dule and dole,  
But love remained a flame within my soul.

What though I watched and fasted and did good  
Like any saint among my sisterhood,  
God could not be deceived, God understood

How night and day my love was as a cry  
Calling my lover out of earth and sky  
The while I shut the bars against reply.

Years thence a message came: I stood to deal  
The lepers' portions through the bars of steel;  
A pilgrim thrust me something shut with seal.

I could not know him in his hoodings hid;  
Besides, he fled: his package I undid;  
Lancelot's leopard-crest was on the lid.

Within, on scarlet ivory, there lay  
A withered branchlet, having leaves of gray.  
A writing said: "This is an olive spray

Picked for your blessing from a deathless tree  
That shades the garden of Gethsemane;  
May it give peace, as it has given me."

Did it give peace? Alas, a woman knows  
The rind without may deaden under blows;  
But who has peace when all within's a rose?

THEN, after many years, a rider came,  
An old lame man upon a horse as lame,  
Hailing me 'Queen' and calling me by name.

I knew him; he was Bors of Gannis, he.  
He said that in his chapel by the sea  
My lover on his death-bed longed for me.

No vows could check me at that dying cry,  
I cast my abbess-ship and nunhood by . . .  
I prayed, "God, let me see him ere he die."

We passed the walls of Camelot: we passed  
Sand-raddled Severn shadowing many a mast,  
And bright Caerleon where I saw him last.

Westward we went, till, in an evening, lo,  
A bay of bareness with the tide at flow,  
And one green headland in the sunset's glow.

There was the chapel, at a brooklet's side.  
I galloped downhill to it with my guide.  
I was too late, for Lancelot had died.

I had last seen him as a flag in air,  
A battle banner bidding men out-dare.  
Now he lay dead; old, old, with silver hair.

I had not ever thought of him as old . . .  
This hurt me most: his sword-hand could not hold  
Even the cross upon the sacking-fold.

They had a garden-close outside the church  
With Hector's grave, where robins came to perch.  
When I could see again, I went to search

For flowers for him dead, my king of men.  
I wandered up the brooklet, up the glen:  
A robin watched me and a water-hen.

There I picked honeysuckles, many a bine  
Of golden trumpets budding red as wine,  
With dark green leaves, each with a yellow spine.

We buried him by Hector, covered close  
With these, and elder-flower, and wild rose.  
His friends are gone thence now: no other goes.

He once so ringing glad among the spears,  
Lies where the rabbit browses with dropped ears  
And shy-foot stags come when the moon appears.

Myself shall follow, when it be God's will;  
But whatso'er my death be, good or ill,  
Surely my love will burn within me still.

Death cannot make so great a fire drowse;  
What though I broke both nun's and marriage-vows,  
April will out, however hard the boughs:

And though my spirit be a lost thing blown,  
It, in its waste, and, in the grave, my bone,  
Will glimmer still from Love, that will atone.



## DUST TO DUST

HENRY PLANTAGENET, the English King,  
Came with Fair Rosamund, for monkish picks  
Had lifted flaggings set in Roman bricks  
And cleared a Latin-carven slab which told  
That Arthur and his Queen were buried there

They watched: the diggers raised the covering .  
There lay those great ones placid under pyx;  
Arthur enswathed as by a burning wing  
Or wave of Gwenivere's undying hair,  
Which lit the vaulty darkness with its gold.

Seeing such peace the living lovers knelt  
And sought each other's hands: those dead ones lay  
Untouched by any semblance of decay,  
Liker to things immortal than things dead,  
Manhood's undying glory, beauty's queen.

The crimson rose in Rosamunda's belt  
Dropped, on the dead, one petal, soft as may.  
Like ice that unseen April makes to melt,  
Those bodies ceased, as though they had not been;  
The petal lay on powder within lead.

#### ON THE COMING OF ARTHUR

By ways unknown, unseen,  
The summer makes things green,  
The pastures and the boughs  
Wherein birds house.

Summer will come again,  
For sick things become sane,  
And dead things fat the root  
That brings forth fruit.

Arthur, like summer, waits,  
For Wit and Will are gates,  
Like those the summers pass  
To green earth's grass.

Arthur will come like June.  
Full meadow and full moon.  
With roses up above  
As red as love.

And may-bloom down below,  
As white as fallen snow,  
And no least linnet dumb;  
O Arthur, come.



## SOUTH AND EAST

WHEN good King Arthur ruled these western hursts,  
That farmhouse held a farmer with three sons,  
Gai, Kai and Kradoc, so the story runs.  
All of the hollow where the water bursts  
They reckoned holy land,  
For there, they said, the gods came, hand in hand,  
At midnight, in full moon, to quench their thirsts.

So by the hollow's western edge they fenced  
With unhewn stone and hawthorn and wild rose,  
A little meadow as a holy close  
Not to be trodden in by foot uncleansed . . .  
And from the harvests rare  
Which filled their granaries, they were aware  
That the great gods this service recompensed.

Gai was a hunter through the country-side;  
Kai was a braggart little prone to truth;  
Kradoc was reckoned but a simple youth,  
Though kind and good and all his mother's pride.  
He loved his mother well;  
He loved his mare and dog; but it befell  
That sorrow smote him young, for all three died.

Now it befell in grass-time, late in May,  
That Gai, the hunter, going out at dawn,  
Found the grass trampled in that sacred lawn,  
All trodden as by feet the flowers lay.  
He thought, "Some godless men  
Have done this evil; lest they come agen  
I'll watch to-night beside the holy hay."

Yet in his watch he slept, and when the east  
Grew bright with primrose-coloured morning, lo,  
The grass again was laid past power to mow;  
By godless men, it seemed, not any beast.  
So, when the next night fell,  
Kai came to watch, but slept, not waking well;  
At dawn the trodden portion had increased.

Then, on the third night, Kradoc said, "Let me  
Be guard to-night"; so, when the dusk was dim,  
He took his hunting-spear and stationed him  
Beside the close beneath a hawthorn-tree.  
The thin moon westered out,  
The midnight covered all things with her doubt,  
The summer made the world one mystery.

Then, when the hunting owls had ceast to cry,  
There came a sound like birds upon the wing,  
And shapes within the close were glimmering,  
Hushing, and putting glittering raiment by . . .  
Then the shapes moved: they seemed  
Three women, dancing, but their moving gleamed:  
Or were they birds? because they seemed to fly.

"They are the goddesses," he thought, "at game . . .  
Soon they will blast me"; but he watched intent . . .  
Starlight and dawn a little colour lent;  
They were three women, each like moving flame  
In some old dance of glee,  
All lovely, but the leader of the three  
Beauty so great as hers can have no name.

For hours he stared, not moving, while they danced;  
Then in the brightening dusk a blackbird cried;  
The dancing stopped, the women slipped aside,  
There to the grey wall where their plumage glanced.  
They donned it and were gone  
Up, upon wings; across the sky they shone,  
Gleams on the darkness where the dawn advanced.

And being vanished, all his heart was sore  
With love of that fair Queen. "Alas, I kept  
Ill watch," he said, "and all the grass is stepped  
As though it had been danced on o'er and o'er.  
To-night I'll try again,  
A second night I will not watch in vain."  
All day at work love searched him to the core.

At night, his father and his brothers both  
Came with him to the holy close to guard;  
But long before the midnight many-starred,  
His comrades slept, forgetting boast and oath.  
The hours went by: he heard  
The darkness laughing with the marvellous bird  
Who hushed the woodland with her plighting troth.

Then, suddenly, with linnet cryings sweet,  
The shapes were near him, putting off their wings;  
Then all the close was swift with glimmerings  
Of silvery figures upon flying feet  
White as the thorn that blows,  
Skimming the daisies as the swallow goes  
Or as the sunlight ripples upon wheat.

Then, as he stared and prayed, the thought came bold.  
"There are their wings upon the wall, put by . . .  
If I should take them, then they could not fly . . .  
But these are gods, immortal from of old,  
And they would blast me dead  
If I should touch their plumage silver-spread,  
Let alone gather it and try to hold."

But as the moth about the candle tries  
To know the beauty of the inmost fire,  
And feels no burning but his heart's desire,  
And even by scorching cannot be made wise,  
He took the wings: a lark  
Twittered, and colour stood out from the dark;  
Those figures sought their wings with passionate cries.

"They are not goddesses," he thought; and then  
Seeing who held their wings, those lovely birds  
Were pleading with him with caressing words:  
"Friend, we shall die if we are seen by men.  
Give us our wings, oh, give;  
We may not look upon the sun and live:  
Sweet mortal, let us have our plumes agen."

Then, to the first, he gave the plumes, from fear;  
Then, to the second, gave them out of grace;  
Then she, the Queen, was with him, face to face,  
Within the touch of hand, she was so near  
The two spread wings and sailed  
Up to the summer heaven primrose-paled.  
"O lovely Queen," he cried, "for pity, hear.

These two nights now I have beheld your dance,  
And nothing matters now, but only you;  
You are so beautiful, it shakes me through,  
The thought of you is my inheritance.  
I am unfit to speak  
To such as you, but, lovely Queen, I seek  
Only to love you, leaving life to chance.

I am unfit to touch your wings; but quake  
At thought of losing you; for pity, tell  
How I may reach the Kingdom where you dwell,  
There to be slave or servant for your sake;  
O bird of beauty bright,  
Teach me the way, or come again to-night  
And have some pity or my heart will break."

Then looking on the lovely lad's distress,  
She loved his love for her and pitied him;  
But now the morning made the stars all dim;  
She took the wings from his unhappiness.  
She said, "We have been seen,  
We cannot dance again upon this green,  
And where I dwell is past the wilderness."

"O tell me where," he cried, "for I shall find  
The way there." "Ah," she answered, "way is none.  
We dwell South of the Earth, East of the Sun,  
Beyond the savage rocks and seas unkind;  
You have no wings for flight,  
No earthly mortal knows the course aright,  
Unless the three Queens have it still in mind."

"And where are they?" he asked. "Far, far," she said,  
"Somewhere beyond the sunset in the West;  
In seeking me you choose a weary quest.  
Now, friend, farewell." "One minute more," he prayed:  
"Beloved, I shall try . . .  
For I shall love you only till I die . . .  
And seeking you, I shall not be afraid."

Her glowing face was noble with sweet thought.  
"O friend," she said, "the love of me will bring  
Loneliness, toil and many a bitter thing;  
Nor can the friend you strive to help in aught.  
But I will wait you there . . .  
Come, even with palsied limbs and snowy hair,  
All things are truly found if truly sought."

Then, leaning suddenly, she kissed his lips,  
And pressed one glittering feather in his hand,  
And swept away above the wakening land  
As the white owl at dusk from cover slips . . .  
Up the dark wood her gleam  
Shone, as adown a basalt shines a stream;  
Then she was gone and joy was in eclipse.

At first, he hoped that she would come again:  
He watched the next night through: no dancers shone;  
Then the next night, until the stars were gone;  
Then the third night, but vigil was in vain.  
"She cannot come," he cried,  
"I will go seek her Kingdom far and wide;  
Better to die in search than live in pain."

So at the downland market he enquired  
Of all the tinkers, if they knew the way  
South of the Earth? "There's no such land," said they;  
"We have gone roving Earth till we are tired  
And never heard the name."  
The wandering merchants told the lad the same:  
They knew all lands, but not the one desired.

And in the inn, a travelling minstrel told  
Of lands beyond the sea, both East and West,  
Lands where the phoenix has her burning nest,  
And trees have emerald leaves and fruits of gold,  
But no land East the Sun . . .  
"Boy, I have been," he said, "there is not one."  
"None." Kradoc thought, "there must be, to the bold."

He bade farewell to father, brothers, home,  
Friends, and the grasses that her feet had pressed;  
He sailed to find the Three Queens in the West,  
O'er many a billow with a toppling comb,  
Till, 'neath the western star,  
He trod the forest where the were-wolves are  
And spied a hut, as of some witch or gnome.

There sat an old crone wrinkled nose to chin.  
"Lady," he said, "since I have gone astray,  
Seeking the queens to tell me of my way,  
Have you some shed that I can rest me in?  
In recompense, I'll cut  
Your winter's firing and repair your hut."  
"O wonderful," she said, "new times begin.

I have reigned here for twenty oak-tree lives,  
Yet never once has stranger spoken thus,  
Bowing, uncovered, thoughtful, courteous:  
What marvellous young noble here arrives?  
One who goes South the Earth!  
I govern all four-footed beasts from birth,  
To-morrow I will ask them and their wives,

If any know the way to that far land.  
Rest here to-night." And when the morrow came  
All the four-footed creatures, wild and tame,  
Ran thither at the lifting of her hand:  
Slink tigers yellow-eyed,  
The horse, the stag, the rabbit and his bride,  
Fur, antlers, horns, as many as the sand.

They listened while she questioned of the way:  
"South of the Earth?" they answered. "Madam, no.  
It is a country where we never go . . .  
There is not such a land, the bisons say.  
Ask of the birds who fly;  
The eagle may have seen it from the sky,  
If not the eagle, then the seagull may."

"So," the Queen said, "my people cannot tell  
You must away to ask my Sister Queen  
To ask her subject birds if they have seen  
A country South the Earth where people dwell.  
A year hence, travelling hard,  
You may be with her, if no ills retard.  
Good luck attend. Commend me to her well."

After a twelvemonths' tramp he reached a lake  
Wide-shimmering, beyond a waste of reeds;  
There by a hovel mouldered green with weeds,  
An old hag mumbled, gap-toothed as a rake.  
"Lady," he pled, "I pray  
You grant me shelter, I have lost my way;  
All such requital as I can I'll make.

I will re-thatch your house and cut your corn,  
And gather in your apples from the tree."  
"O wonderful; new times begin," said she.  
"I have lived here since roses had a thorn,  
Yet never once till now  
Has courteous youth addressed me with a bow.  
And you go East the Sun and are forlorn?

I govern all the birds that know the air;  
Rest here to-night; to-morrow I will ask  
If any of them all can help your task  
Or know the ways by which men journey there."  
When morning came, she cried  
"Come hither, birds," and from the heavens wide  
Came erne and geier, heron, finch and stare,

Jay, robin, blackbird, sparrow, croaking crow,  
Hawks from the height their talons brown with blood,  
Gannets that snatch the herring from the flood,  
And fiery birds that glitter as they go.

"East of the Sun?" they said . . .

"We have flown windy space since wings were made . . .  
There's no such land. Perhaps the fish may know."

"So," the Queen said, "my subjects cannot guide.  
You must go ask my Sister Queen, who rules  
The dwellers in the rivers and the pools  
And the green seas that waver yet abide.  
A year's hard travelling hence  
Should bring you there: her Kingdom is immense,  
Her folk know every country washed by tide."

After another year he trod the beach  
Beside an ocean breaking wave by wave.  
There an old hag peered from a dripping cave.  
"O ocean Queen," he cried, "grant, I beseech,  
That I may rest till day.  
To-morrow I will labour to repay  
Your kindness to me as your wish shall teach."

"O wonderful; new times begin," she said.  
"I have lived here since raindrops became sea;  
Yet none till now has spoken thus to me,  
Courteous and kind and modest as a maid.  
South of the Earth you go?  
Rest for to-night; to-morrow you shall know  
If those I govern know it and can aid."

When morning came, the Queen gave her command,  
And straight the bay was white with many a streak  
From the swift fins of those that cannot speak:  
Whales, dolphins, salmon, hurrying to the land;  
Herrings, the pickerels fierce,  
Mackerel with blue flanks writ with magic verse,  
And cuttles such as 'eye has never scanned.



The thought passed to and fro, without a word.  
"Ah," the Queen said, "they cannot help you, friend;  
Between the world's edge and the ocean's end  
No fish, no four-foot beast, no flying bird  
Has heard of any place  
South of the Earth: you say the human race  
Knows no such land. Your seeking is absurd.

Why not abandon what is surely vain?  
Why not return to all you left at home,  
To shear the shining furrow down the loam  
Feeling the plough-team lean against the rein?  
To marry; and be skilled  
In all good crafts, and have your granaries filled  
And live till Death comes gently without pain?

Were these not better than the life you choose,  
Seeking the thing that is not?" "No," said he;  
"This feather, that still shines, she gave to me;  
I will go on, though every footstep bruise."  
Out in the bay a stir  
Broke the land's quiet image into blur . . .  
"Wait yet," the Queen said, "something comes with news.

Yes, news of South the Earth . . . the fish that flies,  
The thing that beasts and birds and fish disown;  
He has a rumour of it, he alone . . .  
Go with him therefore, if you think it wise.  
These silver wings and fins  
Will help you thither; and Desire wins  
Though the Desired, won, may prove no prize."

Then with that silvery skimmer of the seas  
He sped across the unquiet fatal field,  
Now pastured on by haze, now ridged and steeled,  
Now low, now loud, but never at its ease;  
Till a last leaping flight  
Bore him ashore through billows crashing white  
Beneath a cliff of granite topped by trees.

And at the scree-top, lo, the crag was sheer,  
Hard granite face, nine hundred feet and more,  
Gleaming where drifts of cataracts came o'er  
And trackless to the foot of mountaineer.  
He traced along beneath,  
Among the boulders and the stunted heath,  
And ever and anon he seemed to hear

From somewhere up above, the cry and bay  
Of dogs and hounds together giving tongue,  
So that his spirit was with terror wrung  
Lest these should be the hunting dogs who slay  
Like wolves, what men they meet;  
He was defenceless and without retreat,  
But thought, "Since hounds are there, there is a way

Up to the summit; and perhaps the hounds  
Have huntsmen with them who would succour me."  
So thrice he hailed, all unavailingly.  
Then o'er the tumbled rocks with leaps and bounds  
A dog came swiftly to him,  
Barking and wagging tail as though he knew him.  
It was his dog, long dead to smells and sounds,

Long buried in that distant Berkshire place,  
Now here alive, and crying, "Master, come,  
This is our ever-living happy home . . .  
Come with me up the track the rabbits trace;  
This way, and have no fear.  
Climb with me to the forest, Master dear.  
We live there always in delightful chase.

All day we hunt whatever game we choose,  
Then, in the dusk, we pull it down and eat;  
But by the dawn it runs again on feet,  
Alive and scattering scent across the dews . . .  
Now, up the rock top; lo,  
The forest, green as Berkshire long ago.  
There run the hounds at game they cannot lose.'

And, as he spoke, the precipice was scaled.  
There lay a marvellous land of oak trees high,  
With grass where hounds were running in full cry  
After immortal game that never failed.  
All dogs of every kind  
Routed or hunted as they had the mind,  
And all were glad, for all were waggy-tailed.

"Come with me, Master, through the forest green,"  
The little dog said, "as we went of old  
Along the Icknield underneath the wold.  
Here we forget, in time, what we have been;  
But I remember well  
The rabbits and the moles and the rich smell  
Of those old warrens in that happy scene,

And mind your kindness to me." Then they went  
For three long days across the forest land,  
Until they reached a desert, white with sand.  
"Stay here," the dog said. "Someone will be sent  
To guide you further on."  
He licked his hand and bounded and was gone.  
The desert stretched its desolate extent.

Its saltness nourisht naught but poisonous things,  
The moon in silence looked upon its waste,  
Then, towards dawn, a something came in haste  
Trotting the sand or skimming it on wings:  
It was his long-dead mare,  
Coming with whinnys to greet him there,  
Dreading no adder's bite nor scorpion stings.

"Master," she said, "I come out of my rest  
To bear you hence upon my wings of flame,  
For I can fly now, nothing makes me lame . . .  
Mount me and lay both hands upon my crest.  
O I remember well,  
Deep in my spirit, all the Berkshire fell  
And you and I at gallop, heading west.

Now for a time I rest me from the past,  
But those old days recur; the huntsman's horn,  
The opening of the bin-lid for the corn,  
The sweet red apples tumbling to the blast.  
You with the bit, which I  
Dodged, till the oat-sieve shook too temptingly . . .  
And all your kindness to me to the last.

Now mount and ride, together we will go  
A swifter gallop than we ever knew."  
Then, when he mounted, instantly she flew  
Over the desert white with salt like snow;  
Skimming the sudden whip  
Of the blunt adder with the swollen lip;  
Making the sage flow back as waters flow.

Till after three long days she made a halt  
Upon the beaches of a sea whose waves  
Moaned like to cattle in the glittering caves  
And fed the tremulous jellies with their salt.  
"O Master mine, farewell,"  
The mare said. "Now I gallop back to dwell  
In far green pastures without any fault.

For there we dwell together in the plain  
Unbitted and unshod, in knee-deep grass,  
Where never any gad nor botfly was,  
But scarlet apples fall and golden grain.  
And there we whinny and race  
With streaming tails in the delight of pace,  
And muse about old harness with disdain."

So with a whinny as of old she sped,  
Out of his sight across the desert sand,  
Leaving him lonely on the ocean-strand  
Where the spent tide its gathered seaweed spread;  
Then, gliding over sea,  
A woman came to him; no wings had she,  
She moved by love, being his Mother dead.

"O lovely son," she said, "who have given all  
For love, despite the hardness of the way,  
I come to give such guidance as I may,  
And be beside your going, lest you fall.  
O often I have been  
Close, as you travelled hither, though unseen,  
And speaking, though you could not hear my call.

I live in the sweet world that love creates.  
It is more beautiful than I can tell,  
For we can go with water into hell,  
With peace to pain, with gentleness to hates.  
We have this joy, to strive  
To help the grief of everything alive  
And show where Heaven shines at open gates.

And some, if truly called by mortal need,  
Can come, with light and courage and swift strength,  
To vanquish the dull snake whose deadly length  
Laps and would coil, round every human deed.  
Give me your hand, my son,  
The darkness shows that morning has begun,  
And we have far to travel: let us speed."

She took his hand, and, lo, they footed sure,  
Unsunken upon the unsupporting sea;  
They trod the air, unfallen, flying free,  
High in the cloudless currents, mountain-pure,  
Until a land arose,  
Peak upon peak, with pinnacles of snows,  
East of the Sun, where happy dreams endure.

His mother kissed his brow and then was gone;  
He was alone upon the shore, his sight  
Dazzled at first by plenitude of light,  
For all things in that happy country shone.  
A loitering cataract leapt . . .  
A glittering people, crying "Welcome," swept  
On wings above him, flying on and on.

"This is the land," he cried. "But where is she?  
Where shall I find the wonder whom I love?"  
Before him ran a brook out of a grove,  
Bringing clear water to the clearer sea.  
Within the green grove dim  
Someone was singing at a morning hymn:  
"O you," she cried, "beloved, answer me."

He thrust aside the myrtle and the rose  
There was his lover stitching, plume by plume,  
Bright silver wings that glittered in the gloom,  
And singing out her ballad to the close . . .  
Seeing him there, she stood;  
She shone as though the light were in her blood;  
Gone was the waiting time with all its woes.

"I never ceased to trust," she said, "and lo,  
The wings which I have wrought for you are made,  
Save for one silver feather which I laid  
Bright in your hand, beloved, long ago.  
You have it still, I see.  
We win the lovers' heaven, happy we,  
The greatest happiness that heart can know."

Then placing on his shoulders the bright pair  
Of wings, she took her lover by the hand  
And with him swept above that sunny land,  
Thrusting aside, like swans, the rushing air,  
To some green place of peace  
Where love like theirs forever knows increase,  
For nothing sad can ever trouble there.

But sometimes, ere the cuckoos lose their tune,  
Ere pink has tinged the snowdrifts of the may  
Or seething scythe has gleamed into the hay,  
Or nightingales stopped singing to the moon  
Whose whiteness climbs and rounds;  
Then, in the peace which silences earth's sounds  
Save the bird's triumph and the water's croon,

Then, sometimes, in the hush, a glimmering glows  
Into a brightness in that Berkshire grass.  
Those lovers come where their first meeting was  
Beside the spring, within the holy close.  
They dance there through the night,  
Treading adown in patterns of delight  
Moon-daisy, vetch, and fallen hawthorn blows.

## POEMS FROM THE WANDERER

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## THE WANDERER

### THE SETTING FORTH

HER builder and owner drank tea with her captain below.

He said "Are you bent upon sailing at morning's full flood?" And Currie, the captain, said "Surely. Determined to sail." Her owner replied: "It is stormy, and something within Warns me that worse is approaching; much worse, I imagine. Stay until Monday, and give the gale time to blow over."

Then Currie replied, "Sir, to-morrow is my lucky day. The seventeenth day of October, just five years ago, I first took the *Wayfarer* out, at her first putting forth. A fortunate day to a fortunate voyage and ship. I trust to the luck of to-morrow, and sail, storm or no."

"So," said her owner, "so be it: good fortune go with you. But still, I am sorry you cannot delay till it clear."

In sunlight next morning they hoisted her colours for sea,  
Blue Peter in signal of sailing, red ensign abaft,  
High at her main truck her house-flag, the swallow-tailed  
burgee,  
Blue in the hoist, white in fly, at a summit so lofty  
That only two ships in the world carried colours more high.

Now with a crying of catcalls and stumbling and swearing  
The crew came aboard in the care of the boarding-house men:  
They wore the thin cottons and serges of men of the sea.  
Some carried small kit-bags of canvas, or little roped chests,

But many had nothing but rags and a bottle of gin.  
Three only were sober, three Welshmea, who went to their  
work;  
The others, all Scands from North Europe, not knowing a  
word  
Of English, all drunken, some fighting, some screeching,  
some stunned  
Lurched in up the gangway and swore at George Shearer  
the mate,  
Then stumbled their way to the fo'c'sle and screamed till  
they slept.

The Paddle-tug *Wrestler* arrived at an hour ere flood,  
Then slowly the hawset was passed and the mooring ropes  
slacked,  
The ship moved away from her berthing, her voyage begun.

In dock, near her berth, lay the famous American ship  
The *R. D. Rice*, lofty and lovely, with three skysail yards.  
Her captain, there watching the *Wanderer* passing to sea,  
Cried to George Currie, "I'll bet you a rosy-cheeked apple  
I'll be in San 'Frisco before you": the Wanderers laughed  
From pride in their racer now trembling to gallop the sea.

Slowly she moved to the gateway that led to the river;  
The gates were wide opened, beyond lay the fullness of flood.  
There on the pierhead, the dock-gate officials and riggers,  
The stevedores and dockers and penniless seamen were  
bunched.  
Watching her ripples advance as she followed her tug.

Now as that queen of the water went out to her kingdom,  
As spear-like for diving the spike of her jib-boom was poised  
Over the paddle churn foam slapping weeds at the dock  
gates,  
And slowly her gazing white woman moved forward in  
thought  
Between the stone walls, and her boys, coiling gear, paused  
to watch,

A man of that muster of dockers went up to the edge,  
And took off his cap with, "Three cheers for the *Wanderer*":  
then

All of those sea-beaten fellows swung caps, and their cheering  
Sent the gulls mewling aloft: then George Shearer, the chief  
mate,

Up, on her fo'c'sle, replied with "Three cheers for Pierhead,  
boys."

The boys and the seamen all swinging caps shouted three  
cheers.

A man from the pierhead jumped into the rigging aboard.  
She passt in procession of masts through the narrow dock  
gates.

Now in the river she paused as she swung through her  
quadrant;

Men hurried to watch her as slowly she headed for sea,  
At bidding extending her loitering length of delight.

All of the power of muscle of hundreds of builders  
Beating out iron and steel into straightness or curving,  
All of the knowledge and cunning of hundreds of thinkers  
Who make from the stubborn the swanlike and sweeping  
and swift,

All of the art of the brain that had seen her in vision,  
Had gone to the making her perfect in beauty and strength.  
Her black painted ports above black showed the curve of  
her sheer,

Her yellow masts raked as they rose with their burden of  
yards.

High, high aloft rose her skysails, and over her skysails  
Bright in the sun, blowing out, blue and white, were her  
colours.

As a stallion paws earth at the edge of a forest land,  
Snuffing the air as he looks at the grassland below him,  
Where all things await him, mares, battles, and clover by  
springs,  
And whinnies for joy, with his ears cocked, his crest hackled  
high,

And trots down to challenge, all trembling, with flame in  
his eye;  
Or as the sea-eagle aloft in his desolate place  
In rock, or in air, all intent on the infinite smile  
Of an ocean too quiet to blot out the steamer tracks,  
Yet sees in that dove-coloured quiet the silver gleam go  
And launches, exulting, his beautiful body as Death;  
Or as in a city beleaguered an Angel of God  
Moves in the alleys, and eyes bright with famine behold her,  
And courage comes out of her beauty and hope from her word,  
And as she advances to battle all follow her flag  
So trembling and proudly and queenly she trod towards  
ocean.

Her pinnaced splendour moved westward among the gray  
gulls,  
Past steamers at anchor, whose stewards stoppt work as she  
passt,  
Past steamers bound outwards or inwards, whose horns blew  
salute,  
By barges, tan-sailed, lipping under, and schooners from sea  
Past a white-masted ship, towing in, flaunting colours out,  
Past Bidston and beeches of pleasure and buoys showing  
sands,  
Past these the *Wanderer* towed, west for the desolate bar.

Next morning beheld her still towing, her pilot discharged,  
Clear weather and moderate wind with the southern sky dark  
And promise of worsening weather and freshening wind;  
Day-long the heaven grew grayer with gathering storm  
Coming with evil of water and evil of moaning  
Of wind in the rigging beginning and seas ridging white.  
Noontide was pastime of stubbornly butting the hillocks;  
But ever the tempest advanced and the hillocks grew steep.  
The spurtles of sea from her scuppers were wetting her decks.

In her descendings, the fire-bright shreadings of spray leapt  
Over her fo'c'sle; her sails, not yet loosed from the gaskets,  
Darkened with rain and were dripping: she shone from the  
wet  
And southward she laboured, with shoutings when watches  
were set.

Ere twilight came shrieking, the *Wrestler* made signal to say  
"Holyhead's yonder abreast: shall we put in for shelter?  
A dangerous sea is now running and stopping our way."  
And Currie made answer, "Keep towing: we will not put in."  
So on they kept towing in sight of the mountains of Wales  
Dark on the anger of heaven; the darkness came early  
With streakings of flame in the west and then darkness  
indeed,  
Moonless and starless a lightning-blended blackness of  
tumult,  
With seas roaring out from wind roaring, and wind in the  
shrouds  
Shrieking, and iron blocks batting, and swinging ports  
streaming  
And smoke streaming from her, the ship-shattered water like  
smoke.

Onwards she weltered astern of the labouring *Wrestler*  
On, in the teeth of the storm in a blackness so utter  
That no gleam was seen save the romping white races of  
waves  
Rushing up, under the sidelights, to thunder down deck-  
ward  
And hiss out of white into blackness and slowly pour free.  
Both of the fo'c'sles were flooded; the dragged drunk sea-  
men  
Curst, as the bursting salt water made sodden their pallets:  
The night was all anger all banded to stop her advance.

And like a red stag of the forest, who comes from the glens,  
Tossing his many tined antlers, adventuring softly  
Downhill to the beaches, from hunger of salt of the rock,  
And there is engulfed in a quicksand all sodden with well-  
springs  
And struggles, but cannot escape, being sunk to the knee,  
So struggled the *Wanderer*, held by the rush of the storm.

In darkness of tumult the danger came suddenly down.  
Some sudden attack of the sworders that smite from the  
wind,  
Some gallop of spearmen that smite upon ships from the sea,  
No man beheld it, or heard it, or knew it; but sharply,

Suddenly, somehow, the steel-towing hawser was broken,  
 Snapped, in some heave or descent, and, as suddenly, danger  
 Leapt at those vessels; the *Wrestler* was towing no longer  
 But prone on her broadside as helpless as blossom in weir,  
 As may-blossom caught in a current and whelmed in a  
 sluice;

Swept from the *Wanderer* far, to the brink of destruction,  
 While she, the fair *Wanderer*, wallowed, not under command,  
 In breakings of billows that lifted her ropes from her rail.

Then Currie gave order, to get the ship under her sail.  
 But most of the seamen were drunken and lying asleep:  
 The others, all new to the ship, in the blackness of storm,  
 Divided, the some to loose topsails, the rest to sheet home.  
 Some loosed the three topsails and lingered to overhaul gear  
 But all the sails thundered and bellied aloft like blown flags,  
 And streamed out to leeward with roaring of quick cannon-  
 ade

The chains of the sheets flying skyward in showers of sparks  
 Tugging their leads like mad horses and shaking the ship;  
 For those upon deck standing ready to sheet the sails home,  
 Had all been flung headlong from footing by sea after sea,  
 And rolled in green water in scuppers with floating ropes'  
 ends.

The sheets all let go, were unroven and flying aloft.  
 The setting those three lower topsails was playing with  
 Death.

Then Currie, alarmed lest the ship should be blown upon  
 Wales,

Called hands to wear ship, and the helm was put up, and she  
 paid

Off, with the hands at the braces and steady eyes watching.  
 Slowly she answered, in thunder on thunder of water  
 That flooded the line of drenched men at the weather main  
 brace.

Then much as the stallion that follows the hounds, being  
 held

By one full of caution, goes steadily up to the jump,  
 Some red-berried blackthorn with thrushes' nests still in its  
 twigs,

And there flings his rider away, but himself laughs aloud  
And kindles from freedom and gallops with stirrups aloft  
Free in his glory of speed, in his triumph of power,  
So went the *Wanderer* round, through the staggering moment,  
Down in the trough, to emerge and go galloping on  
Roaring, high streaming, full-flooded, to head to north-  
westward.

But as she came hurtling to windward, her topsails, all three.  
Split into ribbons and rags like to battle-torn banners,  
And crash came their gear from aloft on the roof of the house  
Over the heads of the helmsmen who screamed in their terror  
Lest they should be stricken, while steering, like rats in a trap.

George Currie himself took them aft to the ship's after-  
wheel,  
And set them to steer under cover, with: "There, my men; now  
You'll steer her in safety,"—they stood at the wheel steering  
hard,  
Heaving the wheel up and down, though the wheel for the  
moment  
Had not been connected; the pintles were presently shipped.  
The thunder and lightning made battle in heaven above.

Now, as she laboured, deep-rolling, unsteadied by canvas,  
All of her high foretopgallant mast suddenly snapping  
Short, at the cap, with its yard and the royal and skysail,  
Crasht from its splendour, collapsed in its rigging and swung  
there,  
Raining down gear upon deck, blocking the weather fore-  
shrouds.

Then Currie gave order to light the red lights of distress.  
The engineman ran to the lamp-room and lighted the lamps,  
And carried them aft, there to hoist them aloft at the peak;  
But as he was hoisting, the flames were blown out in all  
three,  
He had to return to the lamp-room to light them again.  
He was a faithful good servant to Potters, the owners,  
Had wrought for them many long years in the Liverpool  
Dock,  
But this was his first going sailing to sea in a ship.



Three times like a fighter he struggled down aft with the lamps;  
Thrice, as he hoisted, the wind licked the flames from the burners:  
The fourth time he hoisted, the spanker-gaff crashed overboard,  
Taking the lanterns along with it under the water.  
"O Jasus," the man said. "Thank Jasus, that job's at an end."

Shearer, with all he could gather of seamen and ship's boys,  
Waded out forward to set inner jib and stay foresail:  
The jib was cast loose, but the halliards were jammed in the throat,  
But some of the tangle of gear flying loose from the smash.  
Still it was vital to get the jib hoisted and sheeted:  
The ship might be lost if she were not brought under command.  
Who would go up to that ruin of swinging ship's wreckage  
To clear what had jammed? Then Tinsley, the eldest apprentice  
Went up the weather fore-rigging as high as the cross-trees  
And cleared what had jammed, dodging Death as he groped in the dark.  
Then, as he came from aloft, heavy gear, swinging blindly,  
Battered him senseless to deck: he was taken below.  
Then, sunken waist-deep at the cope, all the rest, singing  
"Hol!"  
Hoisted the staysail, which scattered to rags as they hoisted.

For now the full fury of tempest was smiting them sore  
Heaving the gasketed sails into tattering ribbons,  
And streaming all ropes out to leeward like pennons of pride.  
Over the shriek of the gale and the roar of the billows  
Beat the continual death-drum of iron sheets smiting;  
Chain sheets and blocks smiting masts as a riveter hammers,  
And blocks broken loose from the upper spars hitting the poop.  
The ship was not under control: she was labouring hard.

Then, as she laboured, her high maintopgallant mast parted,  
Snappt at the cap like the fore, and collapsed in its rigging,  
Down crashing with royal and skysail to ruin the crane  
And gear of the main topsail-yards, bending iron like clay.  
Crashing, the mighty spars fell to the length of their tether  
To swingle aloft in the rigging and smash all they met.  
Green water broke darkly aboard, for no canvas was set.

Now panic came over the seamen, who scattered below  
To hide under bunks in the fo'c'sles, in nooks, behind chests,  
Anywhere sheltered and dark to be out of the danger.  
The mates in the full flooded fo'c'sles pursuing the men  
Dragged them from hiding on deck, but they fled back to  
hiding:

For men upon deck saw the terrible pendulums swing,  
All the wreckt spars swinging over like devils destroying,  
Ripping their canvas to ribbons and suddenly stopping  
Smash, at the end of a roll, shaking all the ship's fabric.  
Those swinging destructions brought terror to all but the  
best.

Then, as George Currie stood, letting off blue lights, amid-  
ships,  
Hoping some steamer might see them and come with assistance,  
The swinging main skysail swoopt over and struck on his  
head.  
Men laid him, still breathing, full length on the table below,  
Where Tinsley lay senseless with five other suffering men.  
Then down came the mizzen topgallant, snapped short like  
the main.

There lay the *Wanderer* helpless, sea-beaten, sail-tattered,  
All three topgallant masts broken and swinging aloft still  
Raining down pennants and blocks as they tore off in rolling,  
Her spanker gaff vanished, her jiggermast bent with the strain,  
Her captain unconscious, six seamen disabled from wounds,  
Half the rest drunken or mutinous, hiding below deck,  
The ship heading hither and yonder hove-to with a cloth,  
Beaten rail-under by tempest and deluged by billows,  
Her mate lighting blue lights and rockets in sign of distress.  
The Codling Bank Light showing danger to leeward and near.

Just as the middle watch ended, her signals were answered;  
The small coasting steamer, *Merannio*, offered her help,  
And lay by with signals and waited for morning to dawn.

Soon after this hailing, the *Wanderer's* captain, George Currie,  
Died on the table below; he was known among seamen  
As one at his best in a gale driving on under sail;  
As learned moreover; a perfect sea captain; and kind;  
Strict, never swearing; a trainer of many fine sailors.  
Death, and his comrade the sea, took him into their quiet.

When morning from wind-harried heaven showed wind-shattered sea  
The steamer drew nearer attempting to take her in tow,  
She hove up to windward and fired her rockets with lines,  
But time after time, ere the hawsers were fast for the tow,  
The *Wanderer's* sheerline bowed into the run of the sea,  
And lipped up the living green water, and rising, deep filled,  
Streamed with bright water and plunged, snapping hawsers  
like pack thread.  
They laboured all morning while slowly the tempest blew by.

At last, when the hawser was passed, the *Merannio* moved  
Westwards, to tow her to Kingstown, and heaven's face  
altered  
And sunlight came squally with showers of violent rain  
And blue sky grew brighter and seagulls adventured to sea.  
At moonrise the tug *Flying Spear* helped the towing up-tide,  
By moonlight next morning they moored her and made her  
secure.

And morning came quietly in upon sandals of peace,  
The maiden-eyed morning who wakens the birds in the dew.  
With grayness in heaven, and silver in streaks on the sea  
She came to that harbour of rest where the *Wanderer* lay  
And shone on her ruin all scurrying with patches of salt  
Till shadows of beauty were tranquilly stirred at her side.  
And weary-eyed men came on deck in the peace of the dawn;  
All softly they laboured, all silent, as men in a dream,  
As men in a snow in the winter, that muffles all noise.

As gently as rain in the summer those sea-beaten men  
Blest her with service, securing the wreckage aloft  
And mutely removing the ruin that tempest had wrought.  
So dumbly, with depth of devotion will men serve a queen  
Whose crown has been lost in a battle, whose beauty remains,  
Who rules still by beauty, wherever her crown may have  
fallen.

So hushly, not speaking, in fear they should waken the  
hurt,  
They tiptoed from cleansing to coiling till all was achieved,  
They then crept below upon tip-toe, not liking to speak.  
The smoke from the galley went peacefully up to the sky.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not all was accomplished, for Shearer went aft with the boys  
And hoisted her colours half-mast to the shattered mast-  
head;  
Then all day in silence they kept seamen's watch by the dead,  
With tears for the captain laid dead there, with prayer for his  
peace.

## THE ENDING

ONCE, long before, at her second outgoing down Channel  
Re-rigged and re-captained, the tug *Sarah Jolliffe* had towed,  
Now at her last putting forth from the port of her building  
The tug *Sarah Jolliffe* again took her forth over bar.

Adown the gray river to seaward in ballast she towed  
All high and uncomely, but gay as before with her flags,  
And gay, in the April, past all the loud toil of the town,  
The riveter's hammers, the hooting of sirens, the clang  
Of the bells of the ferries, the threshing of screws in the  
stream,  
The rattle of winches, the trample and clatter of drays,  
She followed her tug to the gate she would never repass.

So down the gray highway of England she stood to the south  
Past beacons that pointed the pathway or warned of the  
    shoal,  
The mountains of Wales on the left, underneath her the  
    wreck  
Shed from her masts at her first setting forth under Currie.

The April was bright on the water that bore her away  
By Brachy she towed, by the Mumbles, away to the south  
Past Bristol, where once she had loaded, past Lundy's north  
    cliff  
And away past Bull Point for Tintagel and Pentire Head.

And as she advanced, towing southward, those watchers of  
    ships,  
Sang from their places a song of the outgoing spirit  
A cry to all farers on ways upon water or earth.

*Adventure on, companion, for this  
Is God's most greatest gift, the thing that is.  
Take it, although it lead to the abyss.*

*Ceaselessly, like the sunlight, life is spilled  
Into these channels till the purpose willed  
Meet with the End that is to be fulfilled.*

*A little hour is given to apprehend  
Divine companions from the mortal friend  
From mortal hearts a life that cannot end.*

*Go forth to seek: the quarry never found  
Is still a fever to the questing bound,  
The skyline is a promise, not a bound.*

*Therefore, go forth, companion: when you find  
No highway more, no track, all being blind  
The way to go shall glimmer in the mind.*

*Though you have conquered Earth and charted Sea  
And planned the courses of all Stars that be,  
Adventure on, more wonders are in Thee.*

*Adventure on, for from the littlest clue  
Has come whatever worth man ever knew;  
The next to lighten all men may be you.*

*Adventure on, and if you suffer, swear  
That the next venturer shall have less to bear;  
Your way will be retrodden, make it fair.*

*Think, though you thunder on in might, in pride,  
Others may follow fainting, without guide,  
Burn out a trackway for them; blaze it wide.*

*Only one banner, Hope: only one star  
To steer by, Hope, a dim one seen afar  
Yet naught will vanquish Hope and nothing bar.*

*Your Hope is what you venture for, your Hope  
Is but the shadowed semblance of your scope,  
The chink of gleaming towards which you grope.*

*What though the gleam be but a feeble one,  
Go on, the man behind you may have none;  
Even the dimmest gleam is from the sun.*

*All beauty is. No paradise of flowers;  
No quiet triumph of perfected powers;  
It lives in the attempt to make it ours.*

*All power is; but with retarding thrift  
The watching Strengths administer this gift;  
Man's paces as a spirit are not swift.*

*All that has been imagined from of old  
Is, but more glorious a thousandfold;  
The pebble lightens, and the clay is gold.*

*And you, the gray thing dragging on the sea,  
Go as a man goes in Eternity  
Under a crown of stars to Destiny.*

*Therefore adventure forth with valiant heart  
Knowing that in the utmost stretch of art  
Life communes with its heavenly counterpart.*

So singing, the Watchers beheld her go on in the dusk;  
The evening star brightened the dimness; Pentire dimmed  
down,  
The lights of the Land's End were beacons to show her her  
way.

Now Eastwards she turned by the Land's End, the eater of  
ships,  
The *Khyber* cried to her from seld-litten greenness of gloom  
"I once was a swiftness that trampled the billow-tops white  
But now I lie broken in darkness with congers and crabs."  
The *Peregrine* cried "I was queen: but my crown has been  
reft;  
In darkness destruction came on me, my beauty has faln.  
Men called me the beautiful ship in the seaports of home."

And now to the *Wanderer* towing, the Lizard appeared,  
The Lizard, the landfall beloved of the homecoming men,  
The first light of home they behold after long months away,  
An outpost of England, sea-fronted, uplifting her lamp.

And now from the darkness of water the *Cromdale* outcried  
"O beautiful passer, I once was the *Cromdale*, a queen  
Most lofty, most lovely, most delicate stag of the sea,  
Now nothing but jaggings of iron encrusted with shells,  
Deep down among swayings of sea weed and whipping of  
fish.  
Yet sweet is the sound of the water about a ship's bows,  
And lovely the shadow of ships going by overhead."

And another voice rose from the water, the voice of the  
Queen,  
*Queen Margaret*, saying, "O *Wanderer*, star of the sea,  
I once was the glory of all of the seas of the world.  
In sailing I set forty sails, I exulted, I strode,  
I rushed like the sea-streaming dolphin, the frigate-bird white  
Skimming over the measureless miles, leaping wave on blue  
wave  
And crushing their blueness to greenness, the greenness to  
white  
In a track a mile broad rolling outward all glittering gay.

And seamen remember my running the seas of the Horn  
Pursued by the toppling gray combers uplifted astern  
Forth thundering eastward all dim with the smoke of my spray.  
Now scoured or heapt by the under-sea currents I lie  
All crushed out of glory, unseen, save perhaps from the sky  
By high-cruising gannets intent upon shadowlike fish."

Then anon from the crags to the northward another voice  
spoke

"I, too, hoped for home, I, the *Panama Bay*, whom the storm  
Set suddenly onto the rocks whence no ship has escaped.  
All rusty and ragged with ruin I cumber the swirls,  
The sea grants a truce, not a pardon: ships may not live  
long.

Ships tread on an uncovered grave and their last port is  
Death."

In bright April weather, the *Wanderer* towed past the coast,  
To leeward lay Falmouth where once she had sheltered from  
storm

Beyond lay Bolt Tail and the sea-jutting headland of Start,  
All the headlands of lights stretching out, all the signalling  
heads

Which had guided her seawards, or welcomed her home  
from the sea.

Off Portland another voice spoke from the depths of the  
sea:—

"I once was the *Siren*, in Queenstown beside you of old.  
Of all the world's beautiful ships we were surely the queens.  
O would we were racing down Channel again as of old  
With skysail poles bending, the lee scuppers flashing with  
spray,

The leaning high canvas complaining and straining and dark,  
Dark with wings dipping, or spindrift: the lean shaving  
shearing

Of the cutwaters heaving white water as high as the rail,  
And the men at the tackles high-crying to board down the  
tacks.

But Fate smote my going asunder: I galloped no more  
On the fenceless green foam-blossomed fields of the horses  
of storm,



The speechless fish pasture within me: the lobsters' eyes peer  
 The darkness within me dim-gleaming with shine of the sea.  
 I once was the *Siren*: we two were the queens, you and I."

So onwards the *Wanderer* towed till the bright April day  
 Dimmed and the sunset was crimson and darkness drew on  
 And England lay dimly to leeward and light after light  
 Cast out her message, and town after town glittered bright,  
 And the French lights showed faintly as onwards the *Wanderer*  
     towed,  
 Around the South Foreland and on for the mouth of the  
     Elbe.

And there, in the Altenbruch Road, on a bright afternoon  
 She came to an anchor: the tug, *Sarah Jolliffe*, cast loose,  
 For she who had taken her seawards had brought her to rest  
 And nothing remained but to steam away westward for  
     home.  
 The Wanderers watched her steam slowly away down the  
     stream.

They coiled up the hawsers and cleared up the decks for the  
     night.  
 The east wind blew briskly, the sun set ere seven, the moon  
 Then new, set directly; they hoisted the riding-lights up,  
 Men lingered to look at the lights of the city ashore  
 Then all went below save the anchor-watch seaman on deck.  
 The midnight passt slowly with lagging steps marked by the  
     bells.

It chanced, that a big German steamer was going upstream  
 Full speed, on the flood, in the middle-watch blackness that  
     night;  
 Her helmsman and mate saw the *Wanderer's* lights dead ahead  
 And thought them far distant, then suddenly saw they were  
     near,  
 Right under their bows, then they hove the wheel over and  
     rang  
 The engine-room signal to back: seven seconds dragged by,

The *Wanderer's* watchman beheld the three lights of a ship  
 Rise suddenly up in the darkness; he saw the ship come,  
 A white surge of water below her, her fo'c'sle reared high,  
 And men on her bridge crying anguish and biting their hands.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

The seconds of living suspense slowly dropped out their  
 sands.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Then crash on the fenceless port broadside the *Gertrud's*  
 steel bows  
 Struck, cutting deep, reeling back, grinding in again deeper,  
 And over the *Wanderer* reeled at the force of the blow,  
 Jangling in all of her gear, while with cryings and cursings  
 Her crew leapt from sleep into action and rushed upon deck.  
 They saw all the lights of the *Gertrud* draw slowly away,  
 The men in her shouting, and signalling, rushing about;  
 They saw her back into the darkness to look to herself,  
 To anchor in darkness and find her bows bent but unburst.

All knew from the roaring of water below in the hold  
 That in a few moments the *Wanderer* surely would sink.  
 They lowered a boat, then they let slip the cable, and strove  
 To tow the ship northward to beach her in safety on sand.  
 For fifteen swift valorous minutes her heroes wrought hard  
 While under their feet beat the death-drum, the boom of  
 the leak,  
 The ship was fast listing to port from the in-pouring sea.

Too soon she had listed so far that her captain gave word  
 To cast off the towrope and take to the boat alongside.  
 They climbed down the side to the liftboat and cut her adrift.  
 The overfull boat pushed away from the upheaving bilge  
 In the darkness upheaving above them: they hove out the  
 oars  
 And pulled into safety to watch for the ending to come.  
 The drops from the oarblades dript gleaming, the oarsmen  
 could hear  
 The moan of the *Wanderer* dying the death of a ship.

For now the most beautiful ship having wandered her ways  
Was come to her ending, to thrust through the billows no  
more,

No more to go thundering on under whining wet sheets  
In the long leaps from roller to roller, the sea-smiting leaps,  
Heaving her bows out, and swaying, and streaming a wake.  
No more to creep ghostlike at dawns with dew dripping  
gear,

Her seamen, like ghosts in the dimness, removing the lamps,  
Or moving all drowsy to pause at the lit galley door.

No more would her beauty come tranquilly in from the sea.  
Past the far sunburnt Heads, or the pine soler'n Point, or  
the Flats,

Gleaming with rice pools, or up the gray Channel for England,

Her sails in their gear, being furled, as the tug took her in:  
No more would her capstan clink pawls and the anchorage  
ring

To the song of her seamen aloft on her beautiful brow  
Heaving her anchor for Falmouth, her mate at the railing  
Watching the growth of the cable; now never, forever  
Would tempest receive her, the tempest all flying with  
spume

The rain squall, the line squall, the howl of the never checked  
wind

Snatching the sails from their gaskets; her moment had come

Most gently she slowly leaned over and lay on her side  
Her riding lights burning until they were quenched in the  
flood.

Then, rapidly down, with a gurgling of air and a rush  
Of flood beating on her she flung herself over and sank.

And then, in her moment of passing, her Power went forth  
West, in the dark, over sea, as a bird going chartless  
Speeds in the impulse of April unerringly homewards.

So, as a swallow or pigeon, the *Wanderer's* Power  
Sped to her Captain in England, the Captain who took her  
First, sweeping southwards in splendour, who first set her  
courses

And hoisted her topsails, topgallants and royals and then  
Shouted to Tinsley to loose the main skysail, and held her  
Under all sail, running free, in all beauty, all swiftness.

There at his bedside, he sleeping, the *Wanderer's* Power  
Spoke without word by that impress of spirit on spirit,  
So that he saw in his soul what disaster had fallen  
And started from sleep crying out that his ship had gone  
down. (

He roused all his household with cries that his ship had gone  
down,

All fallen collapsed in the water the deathbed of ships,  
Her beauty of sheer in the quicksand, her glory engulfed.

Meanwhile in the darkness her crew came to safety un-  
harmed.

The morning rose brightly: men looked at the beautiful  
wreck,

Thinking to save her, but quicksands were under her broad-  
side

Drawing her under, engulfing her deeper, enclosing;  
While flood thrust her deeper and ebb heaped the sand in  
her wound.

Since nothing could save her, men blasted the wreck from  
the stream

And left her dead bones in the quicksand full fathom five  
down,

She lies there deep sunken, unminded, sea-creatures encrust her,  
White shells, such as cover the *Siren*, red frond-waving weeds.

Herself is not there, being Beauty Eternal, alive,  
She wanders the waters of thought, past disasters, past hates,  
Past the world's disapproval, across the black seas of despair,  
And on, beyond anguish to havens of peace whence she  
brings

Hope, Mercy and Courage, all gentle and beautiful things.

She shines on the waters, in summer's mid-daylight she  
shines

For the hand-shielded brow of her gazer is crowned with a  
star

And gently and surely she sweeps through the waters of  
thought

Up, over the curve of the planet, uplifting a song:—

## THE ENDING

*"Adventure on, companions, the attempt  
At high adventure brings reward undreamt.*

*The raging sea is grim with reefs unconn'd:  
There is a way, a haven is beyond.*

*Way for yourself, a harbourage for you,  
Where every quarry spirit can pursue  
Is, in the glory of the dream come true."*

So singing, she wanders the waters with white wing on wing  
Star-lighted, star-guided, the sea-gleaming beautiful thing.

## ON SKYSAILS

I saw you often as the crown of Queens  
As snow upon a mountain, as the rose  
Red in the midst summer's many greens  
You were the beauty's final grace, as those.

Or as the spire that lifts aloft in heaven,  
Or as the wind-vane on the spiry peak,  
Or as the glory glimmering in the sweven,  
Caught by the dreamer as he wakens weak.

Or as the rapture of the heart at breaking,  
Or Power's last touch, or manhood's winning-place,  
Even so were you that set the shadows shaking,  
On ever hurrying sea, to leave no trace.

Far, far, away, the men beholding knew  
A queen the more was passing, seeing you.

The west wind blows the smoke among the rain,  
The rigging drips, the iridescent dock  
Dimples beneath each following pellet's knock,  
From each ship's scupper crawls a rusty stain.

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The winches rattle cargo; from a shoot  
Coal thunders down; a tugboat threshes past  
Towing a ship with colours at her mast;  
An orange-bearer scents the air with fruit.

Four boys, two ancient riggers and a mate  
Heave round upon a capstan, the pawls clink,  
The gathered heaves of purchase fall and kink,  
The dangling yard goes up into the sky,  
Up on its end it goes and swings awry  
And settles square, and is a crown of state.

They reared the pine-tree to its height and held  
Its slender taper steady with a stay.  
What Nature could not compass they compelled,  
There the spar stood, since Nature must obey.

Then, turning pride to use, they crossed the yard,  
Itself a triumph with its manly gear,  
Theirs was a Queen whom nothing should retard,  
They set a sail upon the pointing spear:

And there it gleamed aloft, below the flag  
Over strange seas, impelled by many airs.  
What though the waters raged? What heeds the stag,  
Running the hills, of stag-hounds, as he fares?

He pays no heed, but canters, as did she,  
Billow by crashing billow, sea by sea.

### PAY

THE world paid but a penny for its toil,  
That which was priceless got the beggar's dole;  
Men who fetcht beauty, iron, corn or oil  
Scarce could keep beggar's bones about the soul.

I saw those sailing seamen, cotton-clad,  
Housed in wet kennels, worm-fed, cheated, driven,  
Three pounds a month, and small delight they had,  
Save the bright water and the winds of heaven.

Yet from their sweated strength an order rose,  
The full-rigged ship in her delightful line,  
So beautiful and tranquil in repose  
But in supremest action so divine.

For in the trampling seas the beauty stood  
Trampling those seas, and made her pathway good.

## THE CROWD

THEY had secured their beauty to the dock,  
First having decked her to delight the eye.  
After long months of water and the sky  
These twenty saw the prison doors unlock;

These twenty men were free to quit the ship,  
To tread dry land and slumber when they chose,  
To count no bells that counted their repose,  
To waken free from python Duty's grip.

What they had suffered and had greatly been  
Was stamped upon their faces; they were still  
Haggard with the indomitable will  
That singleness of purpose had made clean.

These twenty threadbare men with frost-bit ears  
And canvas bags and little chests of gears.

## UNDER LOWER TOPSAILS

THREE lower topsails dark with wet are straining  
The lower yards to curves, a great sea runs,  
Shrouds shriek aloft, the fabric is complaining,  
The roaring of the nor'-nor'-easter stuns.

Men stand together waiting for a call,  
Their yellow oilskins glisten as they stir.  
Each clambering comber toppling wall on wall  
Seethes and roars by before its follower.

The ship goes labouring on, until a pause,  
A lurch, while a sea mounts and climbs and crowns;  
Then like some rapturous instant's loud applause  
The thundering billow breaks aboard and drowns:

Flooding the deck rail under, that she lies  
Quenched, and the seaman wonders, *Will she rise?*

## EIGHT BELLS

Four double strokes repeated on the bells,  
And then away, away the shufflers go  
Aft to the darkness where the ruler dwells,  
Where by the rail he sucks his pipe aglow;  
Beside him his relief looks down on those below.

There in the dark they answer to their names,  
Those dozen men, and one relieves the wheel,  
One the look-out, the others sit to games  
In moonlight, backed against the bulkhead's steel,  
In the lit patch the hands flick, card by card, the deal.

Meanwhile the men relieved are forward all,  
Some in their bunks asleep, while others sing  
Low-voiced some ditty of the halliard-fall,  
The ship impels them on with stooping wing,  
Rolling and roaring on with triumph in her swing.

## POSTED

DREAM after dream I see the wrecks that lie  
Unknown of man, unmarked upon the charts,  
Known of the flat-fish with the withered eye,  
And seen by women in their aching hearts.

World-wide the scattering is of those fair ships  
That trod the billow tops till out of sight:  
The cuttle mumbles them with horny lips,  
The shells of the sea-insects crust them white.

In silence and in dimness and in greenness  
Among the indistinct and leathery leaves  
Of fruitless life they lie among the cleanness.  
Fish glide and flit, slow under-movement heaves:

But no sound penetrates, not even the lunge  
Of live ships passing, nor the gannet's plunge.



## IF

If it could be, that in this southern port  
They should return upon the south-west gale  
To make again the empty bay their court  
Queen beyond queen, at rest or under sail.

And if, from every ship, the songs should rise  
From those strong throats, and all be as before,  
Should we not all be changed and recognize  
Their inner power and exalt them more?

Not so, we should not, we should let them be,  
Each age must have its unregarded use,  
That is but of its time, on land and sea,  
Things have their moment, not a longer truce.

Each darkness has her stars, and when each sets  
The dawn, that hardly saw her, soon forgets.

## I SAW HER HERE

ALL tranquil is the mirror of the bay,  
Empty the anchorage from shore to shore;  
A seagull rides the water where she lay  
The ships are gone, they come not any more.

Smoke rises from the town, not any noise  
Save from the gulls that mew about the pier,  
The shadows in the water stand at poise,  
All different from the day when she was here.

For she was here when the tumultuous west  
Roared on this granite coast for days together,  
And billows rode the Channel under crest  
While all the hurt swans sheltered from the weather,

And maddened water seethed along her sides  
Here, in this quiet, where the seagull rides.

WANDERER AND WONDERER

WHEN first the thought of you took steel  
I could not know, I could not feel.

When first you thundered down the slip  
What more? I had not seen a ship.

When riggers crowned you with your pride  
I trod the sunburned country-side,

In cider time, by apple trees,  
In stubble, after partridges,

Two hundred miles perhaps from where  
Those now-dead sailors made you fair.

\* \* \* \* \*

I could not know, but by some law,  
You were the first great ship I saw

Unwitting, I: had I but known  
I would have searched you to the bone.

I saw you in disaster, then,  
I sided with you against men.

For beauty, not success, endures  
I saw that queenly soul of yours.

Angels with silver trumpets blew  
The song of glory that was you.

They were the self men did not see  
Behind the rags of misery.

So is it, in this world, where power  
Waits for the rotting of Death's hour.

Which is but for an hour, though shrewd  
Its poison is on hardihood.

Out of all death, out of all dream,  
I help your spirit to go gleam.

And you, unutterably fair,  
Shine on my mind's sea everywhere.

O opportunity let pass;  
Beauty that no more is, that was.

Passer that challenged and went by,  
Alive thing in dead memory,

We two were subtler linked than most  
By thrilling atoms of the ghost

And shall perhaps be, still, anon,  
In wondering and wandering on,

From whence none knows, to where none knows,  
Save from the gas-whirl to the rose,

And from the rose to man, and thence  
To spirit that has beaten sense.

To that that can annihilate,  
To Heat, all Death, to Light, all Fate,

And all is spirit, spark and spur,  
Magnificence and minister,  
To Wonderer and Wanderer.

And so, farewell, sea-wandering bird,  
Whose flight I watched, whose call I heard  
The time has come  
For the last touch, for the last word.

You, with the transitory grace  
That gat steel limbs a little space  
Have wandered on  
Away, into another place.

I, that have flesh, shall follow soon  
As Life commands Death pipe the tune  
To change elsewhere  
Or here on earth beneath the moon.

However changed upon the chain  
Your shape and mine will meet again.  
When ship meets ship,  
Sea-wanderer, the colours dip.  
The hidden then may be made plain.



·      *From*  
MINNIE MAYLOW'S STORY  
AND OTHER TALES & SCENES

## PROLOGUE

**I** AM a pilgrim come from many lands,  
With stories gathered about many fires,  
Some, when the moon rose above Asian sands,  
Some, when the sun set over English shires.

How often have I told these tales before  
To you, the listening pilgrims, who anon  
Set out towards the wells you thirsted for  
Across the desert, while the planet shone?

Often, perhaps; and often may re-tell,  
In distant lands and times, as daylight fails,  
When you, the pilgrims, camp beside the well,  
And I, the pilgrim, recollect the tales.

## MINNIE MAYLOW'S STORY

**O**NCE (long ago) there was an English King,  
Who loved good stories more than anything.

Many a story did the poets tell  
To him, who loved their tales and listened well.

But one defect their tales had, that they ended,  
Always, at last, the lady was befriended,

The sinner was confounded, lovers blest.  
The story's sun went down into the west.

Then the King said, "Would poets could contrive  
An endless tale, whose heroes do not wive;

A story ever fresh and never done,  
Like the august procession of the sun.

Royally watching mortals from the sky,  
That sinks, but rises, and can never die."

Then he proclaimed, "It is our royal will  
That poets (duly qualified in skill)

Come to our court, and tell an endless tale."  
But those who tried it were of no avail.

Their stories lagged enfeebled and then died,  
So that in disappointment the King cried,

"Henceforth it shall be death, to any man,  
Who comes to court declaring that he can

Tell me an endless tale and fails therein,  
It shall be death, like treason, or great sin,

Upon the headsman's block on Tower Hill.  
But any poet who shall have the skill



To tell an endless tale shall have for prize  
My daughter's hand and half my baronies;

And, when I die, shall have my crown as heir.  
Heralds, go forth: proclaim this everywhere."

It was proclaimed, but, when the threat was known,  
The story-tellers left the court alone,

Even though the princess' beauty was so great  
As to tempt any poet to his fate.

Though she was known as Emily the Fair,  
Heartsease, and Morning Star, and Golden Hair:

Each story-teller feared to lose his head.  
Then the King grieved, for his delight was dead.

No story-teller came with thrilling rhyme  
To charm his soul with 'Once upon a time'.

Only his Juggler and the Fool remained:  
One he disliked, the other he disdained.

Then silence fell upon the palace hall,  
Save for the sentry passing on the wall:

Or some old general coming to report  
On army remounts at his frontier fort.

Men with most dreary tales of old attacks,  
With half their brains gouged by the battle-axe;

Or ministers with courtesies in their spines,  
Or Labour members talking about mines;

Or scarlet admirals, whose breezy tone  
Made the King thankful to be left alone.

None who could charm him, as in days of old  
The poets with the stories that they told.

And Emily the Fair, with downcast eyes,  
Guided the bright silk of her 'broideries.

Loving her father, yet, without offence,  
Wishing the loved one might have had more sense,

And not be self-condemned to sit like lead,  
Dumb by the fire betwixt meat and bed,

Or snarling, as he poked the burning logs,  
"This land of mine is going to the Dogs."

One night the porter came before the King,  
Saying, "Behold, my lord, a marvellous thing,

Here at your gate a young man brings a tale  
That will go on for ever without fail.

He knows the penalty of unsuccess,  
His head upon the gate, but none the less

Determines to adventure for the prize."  
"Young," said the King. "The young are never wise

And all their stories are but washy stuff:  
Still, youth demands until it has enough.

This man shall have enough, like all the rest.  
Bid him go see the chaplain; it were best

He make his peace before he make his trial."  
"He would not take advice, nor yet denial,"

The porter said: "but hungers to begin."  
"Checking a fool in folly is not sin,"

The King relied, "so let him come to me:  
Put up your night's embroidery, Emily.

A tale-teller has come to show his skill."  
Now the dark palace-hall began to fill,

With knights and men-at-arms and palace dames  
And pine logs on the fire cast ruddy flames

That made the shadows dance upon the wall.  
Then the King rose and said, "Friends, listen all.

A story-teller comes to-night to try  
His fortune in a tale that cannot die.

Where is he, porter? Let the lad appear."  
A young man at the entrance answered "Here."

And coming forward stood before the King,  
Bright as the golden pheasant in the Spring,

Cool as the antlered royal on the crag,  
Tense as the racehorse waiting for the flag.

Then the King said, "You doubtless know the rules  
That hedge our Throne from the attempts of fools.

Those who begin and fail in the attempt  
Stand self-condemned and none shall be exempt,

Steel lops away the peccant proser's head.  
Your person seems unready to be dead."

"Sire," the youth said, "I understand the terms.  
I dread no headsman's axe, nor coffin worms,

I venture all things gladly for the stake:—  
This fair Princess for whom so many ache.

I do not come for glory nor for land  
But as a suitor striving for her hand.

If I succeed, and she will have me . . . well.  
If not, come headsman with the burial knell:

And shut me from the presence of her worth.  
For the most beautiful princess on earth,

I come to tell a story without end."  
Then the King answered, "Very well, my friend.

If you can tell a tale that will endure  
Daily as sunrise and as season-sure,

This fair Princess and half my land shall be  
Yours, now, and all my kingdom after me.

But if you fail, you die: are you content?"  
"Yes," the youth said: "the terms are excellent.

If you permit, I will begin my story:—  
Our ancient poets, excellent in glory,

Say that of old this England had a King  
Who dreaded Famine above everything . . .

Dreaded, lest anywhere, in toft or street,  
Subject of his should lack enough to eat,

And he behold his people wanting food.  
So, being eager for his country's good,

He swore, on coming to his father's throne,  
That, while he ruled, hunger should be unknown

To woman, child or man throughout his realm.  
Then being crowned, and settled at the helm,

He called for England's chiefest architect,  
Firstly to draw, and after to erect

A granary with cellars, walls and roof  
Water proof, tempest proof, and earthquake proof.

When this was done he bade his Treasury  
Purchase all corn, and fill the granary.

\* \* \* \* \*

The granary was filled, up to the hatch  
With peerless wheat and barley without match.

'Now we are saved,' the King cried, 'from our dread  
And we can sleep with an untroubled head,

And shall not dream of hunger, nor of towns  
With all their people starved to skeletons;

With their lips green from biting on the grass.  
Men shall forget that ever Famine was.

This grain will last through ten lean years together;  
Let blight, or smut, or rust, or rainy weather,

Or wind, that lays the blade and earths the ear,  
Let them all come, I say: We need not fear;

We have destroyed what has destroyed mankind.'  
So, with glad heart, contented in his mind,

He bade them seal the granary hatch with lead.  
'Let Famine fall,' he thought, 'we shall be fed.'

But mark, O King, upon how small a point  
A mortal craft will shipwreck and disjoint.

In that gigantic granary's topmost wall  
One tiny scrap of mortar came to fall,

Leaving a chink that no man's eye could see,  
Being aloft where men could never be.

Now, King, this vasty mass of gathered wheat  
Sent forth a smell, unknown by man, but sweet

To all the locusts of the world, who flew,  
Longing to see where so much eating grew.

So that the skies were dark with locusts flying,  
Then for three days men saw the locusts trying

To find some entrance to that shuttered store:  
And in the end one lively locust tore

Through that small chink from which the mortar fell  
And stole away one grain. O King, I tell

Nothing but truth. Another locust came  
And struggled through the hole and did the same.  
And then another locust did the same.

As secretly as sickness in a bone,  
So wrought these locusts utterly unknown.

Who could suspect a cranny? Who suspect  
The building Guild, the royal Architect?

Unseen as poison breathed in with the breath;  
Each of three locusts dealt a corn a death.

Then came a fourth and took a corn and went  
Then a fifth locust who was bulky, bent

And almost blocked the chink, but struggled through  
And took a grain, and a sixth locust, too.

And then a seventh crept into the hole;  
And then an eighth; and eighth and seventh stole

Each one a grain, and carried it away  
And then a ninth one, having seen the way,

Crept in and took a barleycorn and fled.  
The tenth was a king-locust, spotted red.

He took three grains, being of royal blood.  
The eleventh took a grain and found it good.

Then the twelfth locust, shining in the sun  
Crept in and took a grain. The thirteenth one

Followed and took a corn. The fourteenth came  
And took a corn. The fifteenth did the same  
And then the sixteenth locust did the same.

And another locust carried off another.  
And another locust came, the first one's brother.

He took a corn, and then his brother drew  
It through the hole, and took another, too.

And then another locust found the place  
And another locust followed him in chase,

And another locust followed close behind  
And another locust, hungry as the wind,

Leaped in upon his tracks and took a corn  
And a battered locust, who was all forlorn

Lame in one leg, and sorry on the wing,  
Came in and took another grain, O King.

Sometimes in hot Septembers one may see  
On gray cathedral roofs the wasps in glee

Whirling against the blue sky overhead  
From papery nests hung underneath the lead,

So men beheld these locusts, but none guesst  
That greed of grain had given them such zest.

There came a black Saturnian one, there came  
A stalwart Jovian, with crest of flame.

A glittering, dainty Venus-locust flew  
Questing for corn, red Martians followed, too.

Each took a grain, and then, a marvellous sight  
A locust bowed with age, whose hair was white,

Thrust to the corn . . ."

But here the King cried, "Hold.  
Boy, by our Father's Corpse down in the mould

Stop this unworthy folly of the flies.  
Get to your tale." The young man said, "Be wise . .

Govern your kingdom, Sire, as seems good  
But leave a story-teller to his mood.

I tell the tale of what the locusts did.  
Another locust crept within and hid,

Under a pile of wheat and took two grains.  
And then a locust suffering from pains,

Searched for a peppercorn to warm his marrow:  
Then a sow-locust with her twenty farrow

Crept one by one into the chink and stole  
And then another locust found the hole,

And crept within and pillaged like the last  
And then another locust followed fast.

And then another locust followed soon.  
Then one, with wits unsettled by the moon,

Strayed crooning through the hole and did the same.  
And then another, and another came.

And then another and another followed  
And soon the space between the bricks was hollowed,

So as to hold a locust and a quarter;  
And then another locust pressed the mortar.

And then another came and wore it smooth,  
And then another came and fleshed his tooth

Right to the bitter kernel of an oat.  
Then yet another, with a greedy throat

Came in, and then his cousin, then his aunt."  
"Stop!" said the King. The young man said, "I can't

I have to tell my story as it was.  
I serve poetic truth, a noble cause.

I will not stop for conqueror or king.  
Another locust came upon the wing."



"Silence," the King said. "Silence. Tell me, friend,  
How soon this locust incident will end?"

"It will not end," the youth said. "It will go  
As it has gone for ever. You will know

All that each locust of those millions did,  
Give ear, my King." The King said, "Jove forbid!"

"It is my tale," the youth said, "and you shall.  
I staked my life upon it in this hall,

To tell a story for your prize, and now  
Many might think you meant to break your vow.

Let me proceed. Another locust came."

"Young man," the King said, "you have missed your aim.

Your story fails, although I grant you clever;  
Those locusts could not carry corn for ever.

They might have for a year, but in the end  
That granary was bare. What then, my friend?"

"Sire," the youth said, "the King who made the store,  
Filled it again, much fuller than before.

And another locust came and took a corn."

"O readiest story-teller ever born,"

The King cried, "you have conquered; we submit  
And, as our Daughter seems rejoiced at it,

Son, you shall marry Emily the Fair,  
Have half my kingdom now, and be my heir.

My heralds shall design you a device,  
On a field wavy, semée wheat and rice,

Three locusts proper, bearing each a grain.  
Girl, never let him tell that tale again!"

## ADAMAS AND EVA

WHILOM there was, dwellyng in Paradys  
Our fader Adamas with Eve hys wyf.  
They nere not sinful folk in any wys  
But angelyk they lived, withouten stryf:  
They moughte so have lived all her lyf  
Dronk the clene wel withouten Dethe's curse,  
But out, alas, al fel as I reherse.

O hellish Sathanas, feend dampnable.  
O corsed foule wrecche, soth to say,  
Thou wast so wlatson, so abhominable,  
And eke so mordrous without any nay,  
Thou didst persuade Eva welaway  
To take the greene pomme from the tre  
O fatal apple, seed of miseriel

For as hit fel by dominacioun  
Of thise derke sterres, as I gesse  
Or rede Mars in Opposicioun  
To Fortune's brighte sterres, More or Lesse,  
Or declinacioun of lukkinesse,  
God wot, I nis no more than a babe.  
Redith thise clerkes on the Astrolabe.

But so hit fel that Adam is ygo  
Out of thys garden for a day or twey,  
Him liste se the wilde horses go  
Thise litel prety Centaures, soth to sey,  
So forth he goth, though Eva said him nay  
He careth never a del, forth is he went.  
Now Sathanas, let launch thy fel intent.

This corsed wrecche, I mene this Sathanas,  
Upon his bely sobtilely doth crawl  
Into thys garden on the grene gras  
Ther as the thikke hegge has i-fal,  
Or els a mous had eten through the wal  
And left an hole: he on his bely crepith  
To the grene bour thereas Eva slepith.

O Judas of dissimulacioun,  
 O false Ganelon of evil lukke,  
 Fly, sparwe, fly, with informacioun,  
 Beth Adam 'ware the feend is with hys chukke:  
 O pypen, blisful goos, o quakke, dukke,  
 Warn sely Eva sleeping in the bour  
 Ther comth this false corsed tregetour.

But as thys Cato saith in Scipioun,  
 In his old boke that thise clerkes rede,  
 "Though all men shryken Morder in the toun  
 What botes it if the wrecche have done the deed?"  
 The woful cors, forblodied, skarlet-reed,  
 Gettith no gost, for al they cry Allas.  
 Now comth this Sathanas where Eva was.

O sely Eva, moder of us al,  
 Thou wast to nice and grene, ye, God woot,  
 The rede apple round as is a bal  
 Goth down the sclendre golet of thy throat;  
 Thou ettist it when thou was tolde noot . . .  
 Wepe, Adam, wepe, thy wyf has lost hir sense,  
 Sewith thy napron, farewell innocence.

For ye han herd how Adamas and Eve  
 For apple-take were chased our of hir bour,  
 Where the swete birdis sang in the grene leve  
 They might not stop a minute ne an hour.  
 Their salte teres wetted many a flour;  
 Hem listed nat to wenden wel away,  
 But out they went, ther nis namore to say.

### THE LOVE GIFT

IN King Marc's palace at the valley-head  
 All seemed in happiness: Isolt the Queen  
 And Marc the King were lovers newly wed;  
 Brangwen, the maiden, watcht them with soft eyes;  
 Tristan would pluck his harp-strings till they pled  
 To all hearts there, and April flourisht green.  
 Men said, "Our kingdom becomes Paradise."

But Tristan and the Queen were lovers sworn  
Both having drunk the love-drink meant for Marc.  
Brangwen in bitter anguish went forlorn,  
Loving the King: she, too, had drunk the dram,  
Had played the Queen that marriage night till morn,  
And lived upon her memory of the dark.  
These souls, like petals in a mill-race swam.

It fell that Marc, upon Midsummer Eve,  
Went to the holy hill above the wood  
And saw the moon steal slowly up and cleave  
The white, still clouds that glittered as she came.  
And lo, he saw the forest-goddess leave  
The aged Oak of Watching that there stood;  
She sped to him, and called him by his name.

She was a mighty lady crowned with oak  
In its young green, with oak-apple; she held  
In her left hand a spear clutcht to her cloak,  
Her marvellous hair was gathered to her head.  
Her sandals were bright fire without smoke.  
Her robe was of fresh beechen leaves all stelled  
With hawthorn blossom that never would be dead.

Antlers she bore, and from her leafy dress  
Peer'd squirrels' eyes intelligencing quick  
All things that happened with all sudden-ness.  
The swiftness of the forest life was hers  
All, from the ousel running 'neath the cress  
To soft-foot stags that never snap the stick;  
Her voice was as the forest when it stirs.

"King Marc," she said, "Since you have honoured me  
At all times, having kept this holy copse  
From hunting horn and hound forever free,  
Nor let the woodmen's axes lop and split  
The branches of my oaken dwelling-tree,  
Where falcons nest and the red squirrel hops,  
Now you shall joy in my reward for it.

"I have three gifts to offer to your choice:  
Wisdom and Power and Immortality,  
Wisdom that makes the spinning stars rejoice;  
Power that makes the singing stars to spin;  
And last, that Death shall never still your voice,  
Eternal Living, Marc, from Death set free.  
Which shall I give you? you shall choose: begin.

"Each of the three gifts you may give away  
But must not share: I cannot help you choose:—  
Each is a glory wrested from the clay  
By spirit striving against mortal odds  
To hive a little sunlight from the day.  
Each is a splendour for immortal use,  
Each, being had, will make you like the gods."

She waited, while Marc pondered which to take  
Of those three glowing fruits the goddess had.  
Rejecting any would be such mistake  
But this he thought: "Since any may be given,  
Which were the loveliest gift for me to make  
To my beloved Queen, to make her glad?  
Which would my Isolt love, my bird of Heaven?"

And thought "The gift of Immortality  
Would be the loveliest gift, it would ensure  
That Death would spare that living ecstasy,  
That April, at whose passing the grass springs;  
Death should be powerless on such as she;  
That White Rose of Midsummer should endure,  
Bringing forever the beauty that she brings . . .

"Therefore," (he told the goddess) "I will choose  
Immortal Life of what you offer here  
Healing to every cut, balm to each bruise,  
Life, flowing in wherever fever is,  
Life, the advancing knight who cannot lose,  
Life, that is enemy to death and fear,  
Life, that brings vision to the mind amiss."

The goddess gave the central glowing fruit,  
"This gives immortal life to whomso eats,"  
She said, "It grows upon a deathless root  
Men see it glimmer if they give their lives.  
Breath cannot falter nor the pulse be mute  
Of whomso swallows its exciting sweets.  
Eat and be quit of all that Death contrives:

Or give (you may not share) if give you must . . .  
Only a god's gift should not lightly pass  
At greedy bidding from a mortal lust.  
God chooses the recipients of his gifts,  
As earthly kings their messengers of trust,  
The golden vessels not the things of brass,  
Not clay that crumbles nor the sand that shifts."

Then she was gone as stilly as the moon  
Creeps into mist; not any hazel stirred.  
Marc lookt upon the goddess' glowing boon:—  
A quince, like living ember to the sight;  
Of intense tint, but ever changing soon,  
As gorget jewels on the humming-bird;  
Now drawing to itself, now giving, light.

Then hastening back to palace, Marc repaired  
Straight to the Queen and cried "Isolt, my own,  
I bring you here Life's very essence bared.  
Accept the fruit of immortality;  
The spirit powers forbid it to be shared;  
Its excellence must be for you alone,  
Life at its fullest, for eternity.

"The goddess gave this wonder even now  
And said: 'The Eater cannot taste of Death,'  
This apple grew on an immortal bough  
Whose roots are thrust in eternal things.  
Beloved, with this gift I Thee endow,  
Eat, my beloved, that your blood and breath  
May be exempt from mortal sorrowings.

"And be, forever, beauty, as they are  
Now, to myself, O treasure of the West.  
My joy, my Morning and my Evening Star,  
I have so longed for such a gift to give . . .  
The winds will blow my perisht dust afar  
This dust that loves you and that you have blest.  
What matters that, beloved: you will live."

Then Isolt took the Fruit of Life and said  
"Marc, you were ever generous, to the soul;  
I take this precious gift that you have made.  
But for the eating of this living fruit . . .  
That is a question to be deeply weighed.  
How beautiful it is . . . like glowing coal . .  
Ask me not what I purpose, but be mute

"About it: it were better if we both  
Kept silence about this most marvellous gift.  
My husband, ever since we plighted troth  
You have been royal to me, gift and thought.  
I who have profited have suffered sloth  
To check the gratitude that should be swift  
And generous as the gift, and as unsought."

She bowed her lips upon the fruit and went.  
That following afternoon at milking time  
When all the palace hinds were up the bent  
(Save the smiths shoeing and the men at mill)  
She stole into the gallery and lent  
Over the rail, and softly sang a rhyme,  
And Tristan came at call to know her will.

"Tristan," she said, "My heart's beloved friend,  
This fire-glowing fruit that has been given,  
Gives to the Eater Life without an end.  
I cannot share it; but I cannot eat  
Taking a joy I cannot give nor lend  
To you, beloved soul, my earthly Heaven.  
Take it from me, and be immortal, sweet.

"For then I shall be happy, knowing this  
'My Tristan is alive, through love of mine.'  
Out of our loving and the joy it is  
I give this golden apple of the sun;  
Beloved, take it, though it once was his . . .  
Marc's . . . it is yours, I kiss it for a sign,  
Kiss it for my sake, my beloved one."

So Tristan took the fruit, and as he took  
An aged crone beside the fire awoke  
In the dark settle in the chimney nook,  
And whimper'd: "Ai, my little grandchild's late,  
And I'm forgotten being palsy-strook;  
My breath is shocking and my heart is broke."  
Tristan slipt sidelong thence and out at gate.

But being by himself he thought, "Alack,  
I cannot take the gift that Marc has given  
(Doubtless with passion), I must give it back.  
How could I live forever without her?  
We are two wild-duck in a single track  
Bound to a mere whose reeds are tempest driven  
But we are utterly one amid the stir."

So, when he next met Isolt in the hall,  
He said: "I cannot keep your precious gift.  
We are each other's, let us share in all,  
Living or dying, O beloved heart.  
Love is most royal, without self, or thrift,  
Or wisdom, or concern for what may fall,  
Beyond the longing for the counterpart.

"But Isolt, sweet, when first we plotted here  
We trickt King Marc, that on his marriage night  
He drank the philtre that makes people dear,  
With Brangwen, not with you: and that offence  
Leaves Brangwen sorrowing in love, and drear  
With miseries of shame: it would be right  
To give this fruit to her in recompense.



"But I refuse a life you cannot share:—  
Therefore let Brangwen eat the fruit and live,"  
Isolt agreed and calling Brangwen there.  
They gave the fruit to her, and Brangwen took.  
Brangwen the sweet-faced woman with brown hair;  
Eternal life, but peace they could not give  
To her whom Love's devouring fever shook.

All day the gentle Brangwen pondered long  
Trying to dare, but checked by shame-facedness,  
Then Love, which ever ventures and is strong  
Drove her to presence of King Marc to speak.  
"O King," she said, "Forgive me if I wrong  
Custom or rule in daring to address  
Your Majesty uncalled: I do not seek

"Aught for myself, but humbly offer you  
This fruit which makes immortal him who eats.  
Immortal, as the shining retinue  
Of bringers of the Light of God to earth.  
All sickness flesh of mortal ever knew  
Fades from the eater of these living sweets.  
It is for you: man cannot share its worth."

Then Marc, in taking Brangwen's gift, was sure  
That Isolt had betrayed him to the full,  
Loving another someone beyond cure.  
He said, "I thank you, Brangwen, for this gift.  
Life is a precious boon, if Love endure.  
This way and that the angry passions pull;  
Many are eager that the end be swift.

"I shall remember that you gave this thing,  
And how you gave it, and be ever proud  
That subject has so reckoned of her King."  
Then carrying the gift he left the hall  
And anguish from the poison of the sting  
Wrought in him till he wept with forehead bowed  
Nor heeded whither he was bent at all.

But at the last, he sat beside a brook  
And lo, beyond, a little seven year lad  
Was weeping with such grief his body shook  
Choking with sobs and moaning in between  
That Marc, remembering childish sorrows, took  
Pity, and askt, what misery he had?  
What bitterness had happt to cut so keen?

Then the child answered "Mother's going to die,  
So Doctor says, of weakness; when she's dead  
Bran says that she'll be somewhere in the sky  
Where she can never talk to us, nor see.  
And Father beats when Mother isn't by,  
When drunk, he's beaten me until I've bled.  
But Mother's kind: she makes him let us be."

"But, Courage," said King Marc, "and lead me, straight,  
To where your Mother lies;" then, being brought,  
He paused beside the broken cottage-gate  
And said, "Go swiftly: make your Mother eat  
This Fruit of Living ere it be too late."  
The lad ran to the cottage swift as thought.  
And laughter follow'd after, that was sweet.

Then the King turned for home, no longer blest,  
No longer home, but now the tragic place  
Of passionate love's betrayal manifest.  
But deeper sorrows than his own were bare,  
The inmost ache within the mortal breast,  
The pitiful child's crying of the race  
For comfort of a soul no longer there.

## TRISTAN'S SINGING

### PART I

WHEN Isolt quarrelled with her Tristan there  
In the green forest, and returned to Marc,  
Tristan was in the uttermost despair  
And fled into the wilds and livd on bark  
And found a cavern, once a hermit's lair,  
And dwelt there raving for that lovely thing  
Gone from him, back to Cornwall and her King.

And in his madman's rage, he fashioned bows,  
And pointed arrows in the flame, and slew  
The red stags of the mountain and their does,  
The wolves of the mid-forest and their crew;  
He killed, and flung their bodies to the crows,  
But took their skins, and pricking with a thorn  
Wrote on them in his blood his love forlorn.

Then, shrieking like the she-wolf gaunt and dire,  
He would run raging like a fiend in hell,  
Thro' berry-bramble, gorse and forest-fire,  
Hunted by love remembered but too well;  
Love gone and living torment of desire:  
Then dropping wretched he would rock with pain  
Weeping for Isolt gone to Marc again.

Thus, for a year, his sorrow made him range.  
Then, in a summer night there came a change.

Then, as he wept, his spirit was aware  
Of joy within him, lightening his mind  
To marvels that had lain un-noticed there;  
Custom had made him deaf and passion blind.  
But now the universe was riven bare,  
The very grass was singing from the ground,  
The life within him carolled at the sound.

The sallow clover-clusters tinged with red  
Were rooted in immortal life and spoke  
Of earth and living beauty, wine and bread,  
That yet are starry in their mortal yoke;  
The hairy and dark-crimson basil shed  
Wisdom and peace: a moth with jewelled eyes  
Percht on his hand and sang of Paradise.

And all the glittering dusts upon his wings  
Expanded and contracted singing too  
Their unison and joy as living things,  
The unison and joy that Tristan knew.  
Life flowed within him from eternal springs.  
"O Heaven," he cried, "I am so gulft in bliss  
Burn me away and let me live in this."

But, in his joy, a flash of sorrow came:  
"This, being dream, will vanish with the night."  
But lo, the morning toucht the East with flame  
The forest tree-tops shivered and grew bright  
Cocks from the little tofts without a name  
Cried, and the blackbirds leapt out from the thorn  
Intenser rapture came with day new-born.

For every waking bird and opening flower  
And leaf upon the tree and four-foot beast  
Cried out his exaltation in the hour  
And brighter and still brighter grew the East  
Then the great Sun strode up into his tower  
And lookt and laught upon this world of men  
This world of joy for all was singing then.

Then, from the forest of old, lichen'd oak  
That had so often bowed before the blast,  
Leaf-crowned immortals in procession broke;  
Tristan beheld the spirits who outlast  
Men, ravens, trees; they smiled on him, they spoke  
Those spirits of the waters and the woods,  
Whose presence sanctifies the solitudes.

Brown-limbed and starry-eyed the Queens of hills  
And Kings of glens came, and the Nymphs who rule  
Brooks, lipping pastures glad with daffodils,  
Or water from the chalk up-bubbling cool;  
And spirits of the Peace whose beauty fills  
Shy places, that the comer kneels in prayer  
That the eternal felt may bless him there.

And lesser spirits, lovely or austere,  
Came from the summer bracken and the heather,  
The speedwell, harebell and the mouse's ear  
And water-guarding reeds with tossing feather  
And fox-gloves, that the humble-bee holds dear  
All these he saw, all Summer's queens and kings,  
Followed by mortal troops of forest-things.

The red-tongue-lolling wolves out of the rocks;  
Badgers that root the wasp-nests and the bees;  
The kindreds of the poultry-murdering fox;  
Stoats from the barren, squirrels from the trees:  
And solitary birds and birds in flocks,  
Curlews, and little snipe that in the spring  
Make heaven noisy with their whinnying.

And there were otters from the mere, and voles  
Out of the brook, still nibbling at the cress,  
The herons who stand fishing in the shoals  
Watching the shadows in the glassiness;  
And Kingfishers as bright as blazing coals  
Burning blue skimmings where the minnows rise  
And glitter-winged green-gleaming dragon-flies.

All these went pressing up the Ancient Way  
And Tristan followed, for a Summer King  
Said, "Follow, Tristan; all rejoice to-day,  
The lost make merry and the broken sing."  
Within the rampart on the hill-top lay  
A sheltered field, stone-mossy, scanty grasst,  
To this those singers and rejoicers passt.

There they formed circle, but as waiting still  
For something greater that should crown the hour;  
Joy made the spirit within Tristan thrill  
Rapture was his again and peace and power  
And all were singing on the holy hill  
Bird, beast and spirit, grass and mossy stone,  
Joy, yet foretelling greater joy unknown.

And then upon the summit of the year  
So burning blue, so crooning with the dove,  
Nature herself swept thither with her spear  
Nature the naked swiftmess, fierce as love,  
With mad eyes full of lightning, striking fear,  
Hawk-winged she was, wing-footed, antler-helmed,  
Compact of joy that drew and overwhelmed.

"Spirits and subject creatures all," she cried,  
"In this mid-summer hour the ruling sun  
Sends rapture into every heart, full tide,  
Even now his glory quickens every one.  
Sing for mid summer and the full year's pride  
And sunlight flooding." At her word they sang  
Bird, beast and spirit till the forest rang.

Then Tristan, leaping to her, caught her hand,  
And cried, "O passionate swiftmess, strike and kill  
I cannot care, being so sown with sand,  
But, lovely fierceness, first declare your will;  
Null me to dust, but let me understand . . .  
What are you, fiery beast or goddess? Tell."  
Then Nature's voice made answer like a bell.

"I am so swift, that mortals think me slow;  
I am so patient, mortals think me dead;  
I am too little for men's eyes to know,  
Too vast for what I blazon to be read;  
Too jubilant with energy for woe;  
Too truthful in my justice to be fierce.  
All men must suffer, or annul, my curse.

But you, forsaken soul, by passion burned  
Into one hunger, being daft and driven,  
Bitten by watch-dogs, outcast, outlawed, spurned,  
To mortal nothingness, shall now have Heaven."  
Then Nature told him all and Tristan learned.  
The tale of Changing, never young nor old,  
Dust into man and angel, clay to gold.

Then, having told, she sped, and Tristan went  
Back to his cave, but trembling with such peace  
As made his spirit seem omnipotent . . .  
He wrote what Nature told, he could not cease  
Though the moon rose, and southt, and westward leant  
And morning stars beheld him as he wrought  
Burnt into beauty by consuming thought.

All summer long, from day dawn until night,  
The glory of the poem kept him glad,  
So that he heeded neither wet nor bright.  
Nor the rank chitch, the only meat he had  
But beauty welled from out him in delight  
As from the hollow in the chalk the cool  
Water comes bubbling to the sunny pool.

Till, when the summer waned and leaves were dying  
To brown and red, and evening mists were chill,  
And yellow crabs had fallen and were lying,  
And morning frosts were white upon the hill  
And heaven sighed with flocks of migrants flying  
On Summer's heel, Tristan arose and said  
"Isolt must hear these poems I have made."

So forth he went, a ragged, starving thing  
Gaunt as a famine, staring as an owl,  
His matty hair and beard like tangled string  
His body burnt like brick, his tatters foul.  
On Severn bank he heard a church-bell ring  
For the first time for months, the sound of man.  
Then in the dusk an evening hymn began.

Then, lowing as they loitered home, the cows  
Came swaying up the lane before a hind  
Who whistled ballads of the milking house,  
And tears of very joy made Tristan blind.  
His living soul was come out of its drowse  
Of love and madness, he was Man again,  
Who had been mad as any fiend in pain.

Southward he went, until, behold, ahead  
The river and the palace of the King,  
The courtyard and the staghounds being fed,  
And horses on the cobbles clattering  
And Isolt, too, and Marc, like lovers wed  
That morning, there together, entering in  
After their gallop on the windy whin.

He knew them, but none present recognized  
Himself, the wreck with bracken in his beard,  
Him the dogs barked at and the cats despised  
And women shrank from and the children feared.  
The porters marked him closely and surmized  
He came for scraps, they watched he did not steal  
A bone from any stag-hound for his meal.

Then Kai, the steward, flaunted to the gate  
To bid the porters close it on the throng;  
And, seeing Tristan, asked, "Why do you wait?  
You, dirty gangrel? Off where you belong."  
And Tristan said "I come to supplicate  
Leave to approach Queen Isolt, and to sing  
One poem to her from this pack I bring."

Kai looked upon the written skins, and frowned  
And said "But that His Majesty has bidden  
That poets shall find Cornwall friendly ground,  
Such skins as these should go upon the midden,  
And you, yourself, be hunted by the hound  
Over the border . . . I will take your pack  
In, to King Marc. Await my coming back."

Soon he returned and said "The King has glanced  
At some of all this scribble: your request  
To see the Queen cannot be countenanced.  
She sees no lazar smelling of the pest.  
The prospects of your verse might be enhanced  
Were yourself cleaner; but the King, even so  
Dislikes it. Take your rubbish. Kindly go."



Marc passed upon the instant and said: "Stay,  
You Severn poet, though I cannot care  
For what you write, you must not go away  
From this my palace, guerdonless and bare,  
Give him a cloak and wine and victuals, Kai;  
And for your journey westward, take this purse."  
Then Tristan flung it from him with a curse.

"No, Marc," he said, "I am Tristan, come again  
To win back Isolt to me if I can.  
Let Isolt tell me if I come in vain.  
Let Isolt choose between us, man and man."  
"Tristan," Marc said, "I vowed you should be slain:  
Hunted and torn to pieces by the hounds  
If you were seen within my Kingdom's bounds.

You have wrought harm enough in Isolt's life;  
You have disgraced her, you have brought her pain.  
She has renounced you and is now my wife.  
You shall not look upon her face again.  
If you attempt it, boy, the hangman's knife  
Shall have you into quarters in the yard.  
Now you shall leave this Kingdom under guard."

Then the guards, closing on him, dragged him thence,  
Bound him, and flung him in a cart, and drove  
Over the frontier to the forest dense  
Where slink and savage wild wolves used to rove.  
Then, flogging him, they left him without sense  
And so returned: the rime-frost striking cold  
Revived their victim lying on the mould.

## PART II

WHEN morning came, he gathered up the sheaf  
Of poems flung beside him: like a deer  
That limps into dark covert for relief  
Being sore hurt, so Tristan trod the drear  
Dark, water-dripping forest full of grief  
Not knowing where, but wandering amiss  
Towards the camp where Isolt had been his.

And limping on, at dusk he reached the place  
So beautiful when it had held and shrined  
Their summer love together, Isolt's grace,  
And all the ecstasy of being blind  
To all things but the beauty of a face.  
Autumn had wrought her change, the bower now  
Was sodden grass and leafless hawthorn bough.

There, with a flint and rags, he lighted fire  
And burned his poems, all, except the last  
That was the song of Nature and Desire,  
And of Eternity and Time long past;  
Of Doing, Good and Ill, and of its Hire  
That never sleeps, but waits, and has its Turn;  
This, being Isolt's song, he could not burn.

Daylong he crooned it until even-fall,  
Praying for Death to come to give him peace;  
And Autumn chilled, until the oak trees tall  
Had dropped the last brown shred of summer's fleece.  
Then the snug dormouse curled into a ball  
Deep under knotty roots in nibbled wool  
And silent-footed snow came beautiful.

All winter-long he wandered, living hard,  
On roots and dulse and mussels of the rock  
And grain forgotten at the thrashing-yard  
And barley-porridge that the fattening stock  
Left (or the upland swineherd did not guard)  
And green cow-parsley thrusting from the snow  
And other pasture such as thrushes know.

Then Spring began again and at the stir  
Of Earth's green fire thrusting into leaf  
Again old passion pricked him with the spur  
And April's beauty only added grief  
April was only beautiful through her,  
But rocking in his woe the tune took power  
Nature and he were knitted for an hour.

And living beauty ridded his despair  
Till joy compelled him to arise and sing  
The song that Nature taught him to its air  
That pierced like the green fire of the Spring  
Clear as a challenge rang his singing there  
The rabbit-bucks crept cock-eared out of holes  
And stags came tip-toe upon velvet soles.

Still louder rang the challenge of the song  
The great, white, black-eared cattle roused and came  
The bull's chin chiselling as he licked his throng  
His brooding eyes alight with sullen flame  
The stallion, whickering answer, snapped his thong  
And ran to hear: and from the marsh the geese  
Trumpeted out to birds the end of peace.

And ducks out of the pond, and cock and hen  
Flapped and took wing at hearing of the call  
Sheep from the moors turned thither, hogs from pen,  
Horses at ploughing, hunters in the stall,  
And now it arrowed in the hearts of men  
It struck in Isolt's heart the while she wove  
In King Marc's palace, tapestries of love.

And at the sound she said: "That song of power  
Is Tristan calling me: I inly know  
That here begins the striking of the hour;  
The ebbing ends and here begins the flow,  
To sweep us on its crest." She left her bower  
And caught her horse and galloped to the cry  
That seemed to draw the winds out of the sky.

And in the forest, beast and hurrying beast  
Thronged to the singing; birds from bough to bough  
Flitted like blackbirds to the cherry feast;  
Rapine and mating both forgotten now.  
There she found Tristan singing, facing East  
Ringed by the birds and beasts that crooned and swayed.  
As Nature's song went ringing down the glade.

And I<sup>o</sup> flinging from her horse, she passed the throng  
And I<sup>o</sup> cried: "O Tristan, I have come again . . .  
So let get that we have wrought each other wrong  
Th'e are as one as western wind and rain.  
A<sup>o</sup> forget my cruelty and teach your song  
And let us sing together, you and I  
And be away together in the sky."

And then they sang together until space  
And Time were over for them: Dinan's son  
Rapt by the song to that enchanted place  
Heard their two voices merging into one  
And saw the lovers drawing face to face,  
Shining with beauty such as seldom shines  
On faces, here, where roses have such spines.

And then, lo, they were one, and all was over  
Their rags and robes were fallen and gleaming things,  
Spirits, a lover wing in wing with lover  
Were laughing in the air and spreading wings  
Shining like stars and flying like the plover  
Laughing aloft and singing and away  
Into some Summer knowing no decay.

\* \* \* \* \*

Men never saw them more, but Dinan's son  
Gathered those relics of the fallen gear  
And bore them to the Church within the Dun  
And sent for precious woods and wrought a bier  
Inlaid with goldwork gleaming like the sun  
And laid the relics on it with a prayer  
For those two spirits flown into the air.

## THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

DARK Eleanor and Henry sat at meat  
At Woodstock in the royal hunting-seat.

Eleanor said: "The wind blows bitter chill . . .  
Will you go out?" King Henry said, "I will."

Eleanor said: "But on so black a night . . .  
Will you still go?" He said, "I take delight . . .

In these wild windy nights with branches swaying  
And the wolves howling and the nightmare neighing."

She said "May I come, too?" "But no," said he;  
"No, for at night, if robbers set on me

I can defend myself . . . I could not you  
In the pitch darkness without retinue."

Eleanor said, "Why is it that you go  
Thus, and alone?" He said: "You cannot know.

Leave the King's secrets: let the fact suffice;  
Duty demands it and I pay the price."

While Henry reached his sword-belt from the ledge  
She pinned a tassel in his mantle's edge,

A clue of white silk that would glimmer pale  
About his ankles as he trod the gale.

\* \* \* \* \*

Henry went swiftly in the roaring night  
Eleanor saw her token glimmer white.

She followed down the hill, along the brook,  
Just seeing by the clue the way he took.

He reached the forest where the hazels swayed . . .  
Her soul was too intent to be afraid.

He pushed within the forest and was gone  
But still among the scrub her token shone.

In the blind forest many trackways led  
The hazels swayed, the token shewed ahead.

And as she followed she untwined a skein  
Of silken floss to lead her out again.

The gale roared in the branches: the beasts shook  
Not knowing which direction the step took.

Eleanor knew: she followed thro the night  
King Henry's mantle with its patch of white.

A long long way she followed: but at last . . .  
A clearing in the forest sweetly-grassed

With apple-trees in blossom that the gale  
Tore and flung forth; the token glimmered pale.

Beyond the apple-garth a little house  
Stood, shuttered close among the tossing boughs.

Light shone from out the bower window-chinks;  
Eleanor crept as cat-like as the lynx.

The white patch lingered at the door: she heard  
A signal knock: within doors someone stirred.

All stealthily and still as though for sin  
The door undid and Henry passt within.

Then the lock turned and Eleanor crept near.  
In the gale's roaring she could nothing hear.

Yet near the door a fragrance in the air  
Told that a red rose had been crumpled there.

Then in the breaking storm a wild moon shewed  
The fashion of that secret wood abode

The windows high: each crevice tightly shut.  
Over the lintel-piece a rose was cut . . .

Eleanor crept about as a cat creeps  
In evil midnights when the master sleeps.

No dog was there: no sign of life was there,  
Save the faint smell of roses in the air;

And hours passed and hurrying showers passed.  
Eleanor watched what fish would come to cast.

Then suddenly, before the East grew gray  
The bolt withdrew to let the King away . . .

Eleanor had but time to crouch and hush  
Close in the green of a sweet-briar bush

She heard no word, but someone whispered close  
In the King's ear, a someone like a rose.

And white arms, with their clinking bangles drew  
The King's head downward in a long adieu.

Then the King turned and quietly the door  
Closed, and the house was silent as before.

Eleanor watched, but, lo, the patch of white  
Was gone, that should have led her through the night.

Yet following on his steps she saw his frame  
Retread in front of her the way he came

And suddenly she saw him halting dead:  
His scabbard's end had caught her guiding thread.

She heard him snap it, but she inly knew  
He had not guessed the thread to be a clue.

Afterwards Henry hurried, for the day  
Came swiftly, now the storm had blown away.

And lo, the beanfield sweet and blackbirds waking  
Leaping from hedge and setting brambles shaking,

And Woodstock dim in trees with nothing stirring  
Save the cats homing after nights of erring.

Eleanor decked herself in all her pride,  
All that had graced her as King Henry's bride.

"Were you out late?" she asked. He answered, "No."  
It was not midnight when we rose to go.

These midnight councils seldom sit for long."  
Eleanor hummed a merry scrap of song.

She went into her turret and undid  
Her chest with iron bandings on the lid.

She took a drowsy and a biting draught  
And mixed them both and as she mixed she laughed

"This is as heavy sleep upon the life . . .  
And this is cutting as an Eastern knife,

Together they will still the April grace  
Of Mistress White-Arms in the rosy place."

She put the potion in a golden flask,  
King Henry's gift, and went upon her task.

King Henry asked her, "Whither are you bound?"  
"On charity," she said "my daily round . . .

The Christian charity I must not spare  
To those poor women lying suffering there."

He said, "God bless your charity." And she  
Replied "Amen," and went forth quietly.

She visited her sick with bread and wine,  
Then searched the forest for her silken sign.



She found the floss still clinging, leading in.  
"The hunt is up," she said, "The hounds begin."

The forest was all thicket, but the lane  
To tread, was blazoned by the silken skein

Though it was dark in covert, her delight  
In what her spirit purposed gave her light.

Then lo, the clearing, and the little house  
So fair among the blossomed apple-boughs

And once again her spirit was aware  
Of midmost summers' roses present there.

Within the house she heard a woman sing.  
Eleanor knocked the signal of the King.

The chain undid, the bolt was drawn, the key  
Turned, and the door was opened, it was she . . .

A girl more beautiful than summer's rose  
That in the mid June's beauty burns and glows;

A golden lady graced from foot to tress,  
With every simpleness and loveliness,

Who, in the second when she saw the Queen,  
Knew that her Death had come, for what had been.

Eleanor like a striking python seized  
That golden child and dragged her as she pleased.

"O darling of the King," she said, "Behold . . .  
I, who am Queen, have brought this flask of gold,

Also the common hangman and his crew.  
I, being royal, give a choice to you.

Either you drink this poison, and so end . . .  
Or I will call the hangmen who attend

And they shall strip you naked and so hoot  
And beat you to the Woodstock gallows-foot

Where they shall hang you: choose, then, sweetest heart."  
The girl beheld Death present with his dart.

The present Death with which man cannot strive.  
Death that makes beauty be no more alive.

And is so strange the hot blood can but shrink.  
"Threaten me not," she said, "For I will drink.

I, too, am royal: and no way remains."  
She drank the golden flask to its drains,

And straight the savage poison in her side  
Thrust on her heart-strings that she sank and died.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eleanor dragged the body to the bed  
"Lie there and welcome Henry, Golden Head."

Then forth the grim Queen went, and licked her lips  
To think of June's bright beauty in eclipse

And Henry going to his love to find  
The candle quenched that shone behind the blind.

"He will thrust in, and find her lying cold."  
So Henry did and found the flask of gold

And knew the Queen's contrivance in the Death.  
That night the Queen cried "Open . . . give me breath

Open the window for I cannot breathe  
The golden roses' tendrils wreath and wreath

Over my mouth. O who has crushed a rose  
The perfume stifles me: unclothe, unclothe."

They told her that she dreamed; but she replied—  
"The roses choke me: open windows wide.

Someone had crushed a white rose or a red . . .  
Can you not smell the perfume that is shed?

It comes so close, I cannot breathe the air."  
Thenceforward every day and everywhere

The grim Queen cowered from the haunting scent  
Of roses crushed, of sweet rose-petals blent

Red, white and golden, coming where she trod.  
Henry and Eleanor are now with God,

Whose Face is in all Beauty, as I say.  
The pure White Nuns took Rosamund away.

Within their Quire they showed for many years  
A little chest or scatolin of hers,

Painted with birds, that Henry once had given.  
There the White Sisters prayed her into Heaven

That is the rest for lovers: there they wrought  
A white-rose tomb for her from loving thought

So that none thought of her, nor ever will  
Save as a lovely thing that suffered ill.

There every May the grass above her bosom  
Is strown with hawthorn bloom and apple-blossom.

And on the wild-rose spray the blackbirds sing  
"O Rose of all the World, O lovely thing."

EVAN ROBERTS, A.B.,  
OF H.M.S. *ANDROMACHE*

THIS gallant act is told by the late Montagu Burrows, on page 67 of his *Autobiography* (Macmillan & Co., 1908, 8s. 6d.). I thank his son, Sir Montagu Burrows, K.C.I.E., for permission to make this use of it. The act was done in the night of the 29th-30th October, 1836, on and near the main topsail yard of H.M.S. *Andromache*, twenty-eight guns, then at sea in a cyclone not far from Madras.

The hero, Evan Roberts, was a merchant seaman of Liverpool, born at Temple Lane, and living, when ashore, at Rice Street, in that city. He was a single man, aged twenty-four at the time, had been nine years at sea, and had joined the *Andromache*, as a volunteer, at Capsingmoon, on 4th October, 1834. He remained in the *Andromache* as a main topman, till she paid off (probably at Spithead) on September 28th, 1837.

I cannot learn what became of him. He was "a quiet steady fellow" who "had through temperance become a religious man." He was of a ruddy complexion, with brown hair and gray eyes; he stood five feet four inches in height; he was tattooed with a cross on his left arm, a man and a woman on his right arm, and an anchor and A R on his right hand. If anyone who reads this can tell me more of him, I shall be grateful if he or she will write to me, in the care of the publishers of this volume.

About the ship *Andromache* the cyclone blew,  
After heavy running they had to heave her to,  
Seas broke green aboard her, men couldn't keep their feet,  
The weather main topsail parted at the sheet.

The topsail lifted and split to seven rags  
That streamd like banners and bellowed like stags;  
Buntlines and cluelines snapped like lady's lace,  
And snap at both the yardarms went the topsail brace.

They steadied on the lifts, but the lifts broke, too;  
The topsail yard lifted and shook the frigate through;  
The topsail yard lifted and the parrel gave . . .  
And the yard went flying till the heartstrings clave.

Out it streamd to leeward like a wind-blown vane  
Flogged its tattered topsail and thundered in again  
Outboard at the rising, inboard at the 'scend  
At each in crashing as though it were the end.

As the topmen struggled to bring it to a check  
It struck on Robert Eadie and knocked him to the deck.  
Fifty feet of timber with will and strength to strike  
None of all the topmen had ever seen the like.

It was blind black midnight, blowing like the Pit,  
The yard was flying with Death to whom it hit;  
Roberts took a brace end, bit upon it hard,  
When the yard crashed inboard he lept upon the yard.

Now he was above it, now he was beneath,  
He bit upon the brace-end and kept it in his teeth;  
Tattered topsail flogged him, the blind yard banged  
The top said "Glory . . . he is born to be hanged."

Roberts reached the yard-arm and grovelled to the block,  
The yard boxed compass like hands upon a clock.  
Tongues of flying topsail licked away his skin  
He rove his weather brace-end from outboard in.

Roberts bit the brace-end, and gathered as she swang,  
Ready for the life-spring a second ere the bang;  
As the yard crashed inboard he leapt into the top  
The topmen snatched the brace-end and the yard came stop.

The topsail yard jolted, but the curb came taut,  
They dragged it into harness like a mad bull caught.  
Underneath a staysail she pointed to the blow.  
Roberts and the topmen were piped below.

In case some find it difficult to follow what happened, it may be said that the topsail yard, a spar of wood fifty feet long, dangerous with tattered gear, was flying about in the night in the gale, held only by the halliards. In the confusion and fury of darkness and storm those aloft could not explain to those on deck, nor these see. Not one man in ten million could have imagined that a yard so flying could be bridled

by leaping onto it in the dark, dragging a rope, groping out to the yard arm as it flew, passing the rope through a block, bringing the rope's end in, and then leaping with it from the yard into the comparative stability of the top, all this in a furious gale at midnight with the ship so labouring that the masts threatened to go overboard at every roll. Not one man in a million could have been strong, quick and ready enough to do the deed; nor could the valour of the man have availed without the skill and courage of his shipmates.

## THE HOUR STRIKES

*Persons:*

THE SEEKER  
 DESTINY  
 KATHARINE

WOLSEY  
 ANNE  
 HENRY

## THE SEEKER.

The shepherds warned me not to climb this hill  
 To-night, Midsummer Night, "Because," they said,  
 "The Past goes by, with power to do ill.  
 And all the Kings, with Arthur at their head,  
 Return to life and are no longer dumb  
 But commune of Times past and things to come."

Yet I have climbed the hill in hope to see,  
 Before the mist is white with the moon's power,  
 Those workers of our country's destiny,  
 And hear them talk for their allotted hour:—  
 And lo, great figures sitting with a Queen,  
 Spirits of that which will be or has been:—

O, if a mortal's question may find grace,  
 What are you, Lady of the starry face?

## DESTINY.

Nothing, perhaps, save urging to the race.

## SEEKER.

Who are the veiled attendants at your side?

## DESTINY.

Forces that spirits struck, that have not died.

## SEEKER.

May I ask on, or do your laws forbid?

## DESTINY.

To those who ask aright nothing is hid.

## SEEKER.

Then I would ask if these are Queens and Kings  
Come from this windy downland's burial rings,  
Or from old tombs, on this most sacred night  
To see again the land of their delight?  
If so, I'll kneel.

## DESTINY.

Nay, ask themselves to speak,  
They were once strengths for sifting out the weak,  
And resolute for ends, as you are now.  
To Life's uncoultured pasture they were plough;  
To Life's unscattered fallow they were seed.  
They lived and suffered torture and had need.

And I, I dealt with them; for I am one  
That trumpet up the sleepers with the sun,  
And urge them on all day and blow the call  
For the red sunset at the evenfall,  
And new souls for the morrow. I am she  
Who urges from the depths the things to be:  
And millions come at call, and from their pain  
Are sweated out the radiants that remain  
Before I fling them by: what they achieve  
I cannot count: I cannot joy nor grieve,  
Only sweep on: and yet I inly know  
That what they do will be my overthrow.  
They will be conquerors, and I, destroyed,  
Flung forth with past abortions to the void.

But question: for at summer's topmost peak  
All powers in my domination speak:  
And these will speak, if questioned: but for me  
I question nothing: only bring to be.

## THE SEEKER.

Spirits, unveil to me.

[*THEY unveil.*]

You have the mien,  
Figure and bearing of an English Queen.



O speak to me out of the night of Death.  
 Who were you, when your beauty drew sweet breath  
 Here on this Downland? May a mortal know?  
 Ha; she awakes: her life comes pulsing slow:—  
 She is about to answer me: she speaks.

K. OF ARAGON.

I am that Katharine brought out of Spain to be wed  
 To Arthur, the Prince; I was wedded, then widowed, then  
     wooed  
 By Henry the brother of Arthur, my prince who was dead:  
 I came to be Queen beside Henry, and sorrows ensued  
     Not singly but brood upon brood,  
     Till my heart was made sick, and my faith  
     Like a rag under feet of the rude,  
     And I died of the shame and the scathe.

It is scant happiness, sisters, to be as a pawn  
 In the chess of the Kings of the nations, a pawn to be played,  
 Exchanged for advantage, or lost, or advanced or withdrawn,  
 But the game is the game of God's will, and His will be obeyed.  
     Like Him are the Kings He has made  
     To rule as He rules, and to bring  
     Into Earth the Idea of the King:  
     Knowing this I endured unafraid.

I was a child when I was wedded to Arthur,  
 A child when Arthur died: yet, being a child  
 I saw the old King plotting to save my dowry  
 By marrying me to his surviving son,  
 Henry the Prince: he had his will and the dowry  
 And I was married to that most hopeful prince.

The old King died, my Henry was crowned as the King.  
 I was the Queen of England, with bright hopes shining.  
 No prince in Europe had royaller hopes than mine.

How shall I speak of him that was  
 Of all Kings' sons the chrysopras?  
 He was built stalwart as the bull,  
 His countenance was beautiful,  
 His body perfect, his feet swift,

His mind filled full with every gift,  
With every talent, for he knew  
The things that men of genius do  
And did them as a master might.  
Music was ever his delight,  
He sang, he played, he wrote sweet airs  
Which the Court minstrels wished were theirs:  
He was an architect whose schemes  
Surpass'd the living master's dreams:  
He knew the known tongues and could speak  
Latin, French, German, Spanish, Greek;  
And in his speech such sweetness hung  
He witch'd all comers with his tongue:  
He knew all law, he could debate  
All questions touching his estate:  
In all disputes he could take part  
With the best doctors in each art:  
And in himself he had such force,  
Such mastery and grace of horse,  
Such swiftness and such skill in play,  
Wrestling or tennis, that men say  
None ever equalled him, or near.

In courtesy, none was his peer.  
In gifts, none matched him, nor in grace  
Of body, spirit, parts or face.  
None was more loved, none was more served  
With constancy that never swerved;  
And none began a reign so stored  
With things that men and angels hoard.  
His treasures were filled; his land  
Was well content beneath his hand;  
His counsellors were good; his friends  
Secure; he sought no wicked ends.  
The sun seemed rising in his might  
To fill the English realm with light;  
And hourly the thinkers wrought  
More beauty out of subtle thought.  
And life, to all alive, was even  
With the bright boundaries of Heaven,  
And angels walked the earth with men.  
England was surely Heaven then.

And had my sons survived, my Fate  
Would have been ever fortunate . . .  
My sons all died, I brought no heir  
For all the little babes I bare.

And other bitternesses grew,  
France and her influences drew  
The English out of touch with Spain;  
And Wolsey smarting with the pain  
Of being thwarted in his hope,  
Of coming to be made the Pope,  
Was hostile both to Spain and me.

And Henry glowered lustfully  
On courtesans: and everywhere  
Spoke of his longing for an heir  
Who should ensure the Kingdom's peace.

And trouble-makers did not cease  
To tell him that my barrenness  
Came from his godless wickedness  
In marrying his brother's wife.

Henry was coming into life,  
Not reverencing aught that stood  
Between him and a fancied good.  
His want was master of his will.  
When he determined on an ill,  
All bent to that . . .

So he resolved

To have his link with me dissolved,  
By Papal means, if that might be.  
Long, long, he wrought for that decree  
By threat and bribe and argument . . .  
All pretexts cloaking his intent  
To leave me and to live with Anne.  
I pleaded when the suit began,  
Not afterward, I stood aside.

I pitied those who in their pride  
Helped Henry, then, for I had learned  
What devil in his spirit burned,

What worship of himself, what will  
In all things to be master still;  
To be the axle or the pin  
On which another world might spin.  
I knew how deadly he would be  
To all who helped in ousting me;  
And as I knew it would, it fell:  
Their moment's glory led to hell.

I was what I had ever been,  
A queen, the daughter of a queen,  
Anointed and appointed great;  
Death only could annul my state;  
But Death came slowly: I could see  
My ousters ruined before me.

That was no joy; I also saw  
My Henry falling from all law  
Into all headlong lust of will.  
I saw him lie and rob and kill,  
Smite at the holy, wreck the brave,  
Do all things as his devil drove,  
With no good counsellor or friend.  
It made my very heart-strings rend  
To see his soul in devil's hands.

God, who allowed it, understands.  
And, for myself, I took the bad  
That followed on the good I had had.  
I learned how pitifully kind  
Friends may be to a tortured mind.  
I learned that peace may be attained  
By sinners racked and many-pained;  
Peace that is south wind after east,  
Quiet to greatest and to least,  
Quiet in which Earth's feverish things,  
The wills and fiercenesses of Kings,  
Sink to proportion, and the soul  
Perceives the universe unroll  
Star beyond singing star, immense  
Beyond all dream, beyond all sense,  
All order, all magnificence.

God in His Mercy let me see  
Through darknesses that covered me  
Bright planets that his angels be.

*[She sinks back to her chair.]*

THE SEEKER.

Ah, noble lady, and through you we still  
Behold that light in darkness . . .

*[WOLSEY rises.]*

but he speaks

To whom peers spoke bareheaded: it is Wolsey.

THOMAS WOLSEY.

I am that Wolsey the Cardinal, prelate and proud,  
I who was King of my King, who was sceptre and sway.  
To me, not to Henry, the princes and potentates bowed.  
I strode like the sun in his glory on Midsummer Day.

My splendour all crashed in decay,  
The web that my spirit had spun  
Was swept into dust and undone;  
I died as the gambler who fails.

I was a butcher's son, but royally dowered  
With wit and Fortune, which dower smoothed my pathway.  
Men gave me place: men made me a priest: and helped me.

One man there was who checked me, I then being priest,  
One Paulet, a country gentle, set me in stocks.  
It is dangerous to check beginning Fortune:—  
Lads grow; priests become bishops, princes take Kingdoms;  
And I, that priest in the stocks, was soon most trusted,  
Chaplain to Calais' treasurer, employed, besought,  
My advice asked and taken, and my young wisdom  
Praised to the King himself, who took me to service.  
I think that Paulet repented before he died.

Henry the Seventh gave me my chance, as follows:  
He sent me upon a mission to Maximilian,  
The Emperor, then in Flanders: I staked my all  
On doing that mission like an angel of God.

Therefore, on leaving the King, I sped down river,  
Helped by the wind and the ebbing tide to Gravesend,

Where taking horse I gallopped: and all night gallopped  
From post to post across Kent, rousing the ostlers,  
Flinging myself from reeking horse to the fresh one  
And gallopping through the night with owls and foxes,  
Till lo, cocks crowed and Heaven grew gray at Dover . . .  
There, tottering down the beach, I found fair fortune,  
A ship with her sails cast loose at point of sailing  
For Calais. I climbed aboard her; in three hours more  
I was in France upon horseback gallopping on.

That night I was with the Emperor, in treaty  
None ever beat or out-braved me in any treaty  
When I was facing my man, nor did the Emperor.  
Next day my treaties were settled: all that next night  
I gallopped for Calais, got there at morning gun  
Again, found ship; and, getting aboard, wind favoured,  
In three hours more I was gallopping from Dover,  
And late that night I came to the Court at Richmond.

King Henry being abed, I too could take rest  
After eighty hours spurring from post to post,  
But I was afoot ere dawn, awaiting Henry  
As he passed from bed to chapel to early Mass.

He, seeing me, chid my not having started forth.  
I said, "I have been: I have now returned, O King."  
He seemed both startled and not well pleased, for he said:  
"That is the worse, for, after you hurried away  
I thought of a needful point that I had not urged  
In your commission: nay, a point that was vital,  
And sent one after you straight to stop and warn you.  
Did he overtake you?"

I answered, "No, Your Grace.  
As I return'd I met him and learned his errand.  
But as for the needful point, may it please Your Grace,  
I thought of it myself on my journey Eastwards,  
How vital it was; and greatly presuming dared  
(Though without warrant from you) to urge the matter.  
The Emperor's self was pleased to agree and seal.  
Pardon your servant's assumption in so doing."

Then the King said, "I not only pardon, but thank  
A servant so thoughtful, eager and fortunate."

Friends, from that mission's happy speed  
Came Fortune glorious indeed.  
The old King honoured me: his son  
Heapt honours on my head: I won  
Glory and gratitude from men:  
I was made thrice a Bishop, then  
Lord Chancellor, Archbishop . . . more,  
Legate and Cardinal; priests bore  
Great silver crosses as a show  
Before me: riches fell like snow  
About me: and the gay young King  
Left me to govern everything.  
My will was Law in Church and State,  
Through Christendom my will was great.  
I said and Europe did: one hope,  
One only, failed me, to be Pope.  
The Emperor Charles betrayed me there.

I was like sunlight making fair  
All that I shone upon: my house  
Was beyond telling glorious  
With quaintly twisted chimneys red  
Above the dormers and the lead,  
And halls and galleries made good  
With joinery in precious wood  
And flutings running down the grain.  
I had stories leaded pane by pane  
Into the windows, that they shewed  
Shagg'd Centaurs in the mountain-road  
Coming towards the haunts of men  
To ravish women: and agen  
The Rapes and Loves that Ovid told.  
And hanging upon rods of gold  
I had tapestries of silk whereon  
The Loves of Mars and Venus shone.  
I had golden cups and plates enough  
To fit the King with household stuff;  
Of silver plate I took no heed.

My gardens sprang from foreign seed.  
All that is excellent in fruit,  
Or beautiful in flower, took root

There, with such fragrance, and so bright,  
Spirits were tranced with delight . . .  
And I had many a joy beside:  
Green woodlands for my stags of pride;  
Cock-shutes and coney-warrens, stews  
For many a swift pike and slow luce . . .  
Half a shire grew meat and bread  
That my great household might be fed.

They who beheld my state, I wis,  
They only, know what glory is.  
My state was greater than the King's.  
My Herald went with trumpettings  
Before, with the two crosses, then  
My mace-man and my pillar-men,  
Then ushers crying "Way, make way!"  
Then three and three my picked array  
In velvet, bearing golden chains.  
Then sumpter mules and baggage trains.  
Then spearmen in a bodyguard  
In scarlet tunics golden starred,  
And bowmen wearing tawny coats.  
Then to the cheering of all throats  
Came the Great Seal majestic,  
And the Red Hat of the Cardinal,  
Both borne by noblemen; and then  
I, the great crimson King of men,  
Rode stately on a mule of state;  
Four men with pollaxes of plate  
Were at my sides, and after me  
Were seventy horsemen, three and three,  
Riding great horses, scarlet hung.  
And men and children sweet of tongue  
Sang to me as I rode or stayed.

I was a god to whom men prayed,  
A wise god, taking thought for all.  
In scarlet, under golden pall,  
I sat like godhead and gave doom.

There were five hundred men to whom  
My daily state gave daily bread.



But Henry's lust to be unwed  
From Katharine and wed to Anne  
Was ruin to me: there began  
Problems I could not shelve nor solve.  
I strove to change the King's resolve . . .  
That failed . . . then I was forced to strive  
To win him licence to re-wive . . .

Yet the Pope saw what wars would be  
If he should grant the King's decree.  
Straight Katharine's nephew would invade  
Rome, to avenge her: so he stayed.  
I saw that if the Pope refused  
The King's divorce, there would be loosed  
On Rome in England, on the Church,  
Utter destruction that would search  
Rome's hold on England and outroot.

Such was the seed, such was the fruit.  
Even as I saw it came to pass . . .  
That heart of flint and brow of brass  
Broke Rome in England for his lust.  
Myself was stricken to the dust;  
That black-eyed mistress and her lord  
Put some few martyrs to the sword,  
And smote me to the broken form  
Wrapped up in linen for the worm,  
A dead man without power to stir.  
I, Cardinal and Minister,  
I, Chancellor and Legate, lay  
Under the quire in the clay  
Dropping to dust, and all my schemes  
Dust too, forgotten as men's dreams.  
Forgotten as the star that lights  
A trail thro' Heaven on winter-nights  
And falling fades and leaves no trace.

I, the Pope's Legate, the King's Grace,  
Am vanished: there remain behind  
Some gleams, however, from my mind  
From which men know that there was one  
Once, who was splendid as the sun;

Who bent great brows upon affairs  
And made Kings' wills his ploughing-shares,  
And was the central pin whereon  
Revolved that Europe that is gone.

While I was Sun, the planets shone.

[*WOLSEY sinks back. ANNE rises.*]

THE SEEKER.

As you supplanted Katharine, another  
Supplanted you: this beautiful blithe figure.

ANNE.

I am the beautiful Queen who was ruined and lost.  
I am Anne Bullen, whom men still remember with pity.  
Few have bought terrible days at more pitiful cost.  
Falling from Queen to the hatred of country and city,  
Like a rudderless ship I was tossed.  
Powers made use of my being,  
Changes too vast for man's seeing,  
The Will of the Time passing by.

I was a black-eyed witty girl of old  
When, with my sixteen summers hardly told,  
I came from France into the English Court.

Promptly King Henry wooed me for his sport,  
As he had wooed my sister (so men said);  
But I escaped the amorous traps he laid.  
I was the Queen's maid, dedicate and vowed  
To the Queen's service, and besides was proud.

And yet it thrilled me, knowing that the King  
Loved me past doubt, beyond imagining . . .

That ~~that~~ grim palace-bull with bloody horn  
Came like a ring-dove to my hand for corn.

Then, for the Queen, men muttered everywhere:  
"A barren Queen, and England needs an heir . . .

God has pronounced against her: it is plain.  
Henry should be divorced and wed again,

The State demands it . . . If his second choice  
Were English, surely England would rejoice."

Dignities fell into my father's hand,  
Jewels and moneys, titles, manor-land . . .

And people whispered: "Lady, if you choose,  
You can be Queen of England: why refuse?"

And others said: "If you were England's Queen  
The Reformed Faith would prosper and be green

Where now its martyrs perish at the stake.  
Anne, become Queen for sweet religion's sake."

Others (and my ambitions) said their say:  
"How grand to hear the heralds clear the way . . .

'Way for Queen Annel'; how exquisite to lead  
All England's peeresses as Queen indeed;

Call lilled France my brother, ay and bear  
A future King of England, Henry's heir . . ."

When Henry sought divorce and Rome refused,  
Bitterer tongues spoke, angrier pleas were used:—

"Make the King paramount within his realm,  
Strike off this Roman guidance from the helm,

Abase this Spanish Queen who uses Rome.  
The English King must be supreme at home."

Those whom I knew spoke thus.

My spirit saw the images of power,  
And hour by hour

The crown, the scarlet and the pride of place,  
The thousand eyes on one unseeing face,

My Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, all  
Splendid with gold-work, bearing up my pall.

King Henry's hand on mine, King Henry's son  
Mine, to be King when Henry's reign was done,

Were not these glories to a girl, beside  
Having the great King wooing her for bride?

'Tis but a step to Hell; but getting back  
Takes many a march up jagged rocks, alack!

I, who had only youth and Henry's greed,  
Staked those for Henry and was queen indeed.

Rome was defied, dishonoured, dispossessed;  
A flooding spring, with me upon its crest,

Swept over England, bearing me to power;  
Men rang the bells for me in that my hour . . .

All England's bells . . . and London's thousands massed,  
Scattering roses on me as I passed  
To have the crown upon my brows at last.

Then great guns thundered, trumpets silver-keen  
Shrilled, and the Prelate cried "God save the Queen!"

I was the Queen, and all the battle won  
If but my little child might be a son.

My child was a Princess, thereafter came  
Griefs and disasters putting me to shame . . .

Daily the foothold underneath me failed,  
King Henry weary'd of me; foes assailed.

Men shouted insults at me in the street,  
The Court spies sought my blood on catlike feet.

When foreign Kings' ambassadors appeared  
They did not hail me Queen, they smiled and sneered

And called me the King's woman: but, alas,  
I was not that . . . another woman was.

Jane Seymour, once my waiting-woman, stepped  
Into the heart that I no longer kept.

Henry and she were lovers to the full;  
I was not merciful nor dutiful;

The broken heart is often mad in head.  
Then was my princely little son born dead,

And I was lost.

Round me were enemy on enemy;  
The King deserted me;

Some I had humbled or had thwarted, some  
The friends and followers of the Queen to come.

Then I was paid that I had once reviled  
And used with spite my predecessor's child;

Then I was paid that once I moved the King  
In wanton hatred to a darker thing.

I was well paid in those few weeks of hate,  
Lost beyond hope, but having still to wait.

None but the lovely stand by misery.  
My brother and some others stood by me.

One loyal and a lover to one lost,  
Such surely is the soul God treasures most.

Bitter and utter was the death that fell  
On those who comforted my weeks of hell.

In those few weeks, though nothing outward changed,  
My death and Henry's wedding were arranged,

My headsman ordered, and most savage ends  
Prepared by all my foes for all my friends.

Then at the tourney as the trumpets blew,  
Henry arose like one with death to do.

One merciless fat sidelong look he gave,  
From which I knew that he had dug my grave;

Then he was gone at gallop, and the fawn  
Myself, was netted and the toils were drawn.

I who was England's Queen, had now to die.  
That is forgotten where my ashes lie,

And where my spirit is, it is forgiven.  
O living men, for pity and sweet Heaven,

Forgive what misery my thoughtlessness  
Wrought ere my life was smitten with distress.

I, the White Falcon with the starry rod  
Of roses, am a lesser bird with God.

I am in peace where flowers shine like stars.  
The hates and angers beat against the bars

Of Love, that shuts this sunny garden close.  
When the bells chime the loving overflows

Out of the garden and the angers cease;  
Men's souls behold a morning star of peace

And cry: "O silvery one,  
Companion of the Sun,  
Mark not the thing ill-done  
In the blind Night,  
But mark the Life begun,  
The Race still to be run,  
The Hope that may be won,  
Now we have light."

[HENRY VIII *rises.*]

HENRY.

And I am your King and your leader who stood by his  
strength,

You thought you could sway him or hold him, or rule in his  
name;

All three of you prospered, but found out your error at length,  
All you who attempted to rule me, I made you all tame;  
You three were but pawns in a game,  
I used you and let you be lost.  
Be glad you were worth what you cost,  
But think not to vex me with blame.

I might have been priest, but my brother's death made me a  
King;

I planned to be worthy the office, a master indeed;  
I fashioned myself as a goldsmith who fashions a ring,  
That none in the Kingdom but I should have power to lead.

I was not a puppet nor reed,  
But a master in body and soul,  
And the weeds that I could not control  
I cut, as is best for a weed.

What if I found myself in earliest youth  
Bound to a Spanish policy through you?  
This country also has a part to play,  
Not at another's bidding, but her own.  
Your Spanish friends betrayed me and France failed me,  
But England did not fail me, nor I her.

\* \* \* \* \*

And you, my Prelate, who made use of England  
In your Italian game, you also felt  
A better player than yourself at hand,  
Who wrecked the Roman scheme.

\* \* \* \* \*

And you, sweet minion,  
You charmed me many hours, but did not bring  
The heir the Kingdom wanted:—tales were told  
Of plottings that should bring the wanted heir:  
You say, false tales.  
Perhaps, but they seemed likely to be true  
To one who knew your nature: you were cast out  
And with you all your fellows, utterly.

I found this Kingdom swayed by foreign powers  
And left her free of them: I builded up  
A fleet to keep her: I uprooted all  
Those states within a state which ruin states;  
I made myself the head: and any head .  
Which had not wit to bow, I lopped away . . .  
Good heads among them, too; better than yours.

Would I had had a stalwart son or two  
From those six flimsy women whom I tried.

But that which must be is:—

One thing I hated:—  
Disorder;—and another, want of splendour:—  
Both coming from the want of resolute will  
In a King's spirit. Men must think of me  
As splendid in a splendid time; I did  
My will as King: and ruled to greater purpose  
Than any English King since Arthur's time.

K. OF ARAGON.

You had great greed  
Of mastery: no other quality.

WOLSEY.

And men rejoiced that the dogs licked your blood.

ANNE.

For all our love, that made your subjects glad.

HENRY.

A horse rolls when his saddle is taken off,  
So will a land: but not while this King rode.

DESTINY.

The star is southing. The year is near to the height,  
When you must hush till another year be perfect.  
Back to your quiet, spirits; the midnight comes.

[*The FIGURES sink back.*]



SEEKER.

O spirits, linger: tell me one thing more.

DESTINY.

What is it that the mortal hungers for?

SEEKER.

What follows Death?

DESTINY.

Come to me, I will tell.

[SEEKER goes up the stage. The hour strikes.]

KATHARINE.

O April flowers,

WOLSEY.

And summer hours,

ANNE.

And autumn showers,

HENRY.

And winter cold!

KATHARINE.

O days and hours,

WOLSEY.

And pride and powers,

ANNE.

We call them ours,

HENRY.

But cannot hold.

DESTINY.

The hour passes, the tale is told.

**A. TALE OF TROY**  
**TOLD IN ELEVEN TALES AND AN EPILOGUE**



## THE TAKING OF HELEN

**M**ENELAUS, the Spartan King,  
Was a fighting man in his early spring,  
With a war-cry loud as a steer's bellow,  
And long yellow hair, so the poets sing.

But he wearied of war, and longed to bide  
In quiet at home by his fireside;  
He wooed and wedded the beautiful Helen  
And carried her home to be his bride.

And little delight was hers, poor thing,  
To be tied till death to the Spartan King,  
She moved in the cage of the Spartan court  
Like a bright sea-bird with a broken wing.

Paris came from a Trojan glen,  
The prince of the world's young famous men,  
With a panther's eye and a peacock air,  
Even the goddesses wooed him then.

He came to Troy to the Spartan port,  
He moored his galley: he rode to court  
In a scarlet mantle spanged with gold  
On a delicate stallion stepping short.

Helen and he knew each from each  
That a red ripe apple was there in reach,  
The loveliest girl and the loveliest lad  
Ready to learn and ready to teach.

He said "O Helen, why linger here  
With the King your husband year by year?  
What life is this to a star like you,  
The brightest star in the atmosphere?"

O beautiful girl, I love but you,  
And a life of love is your rightful due:

Come with me over the sea to Troy,  
Where Queens shall ride in your retinue."

She said to him, "O Paris, my own,  
Since I married him I have lived so lone  
That life is bleak as a withered bone.  
O take me hence into light and life,  
My spirit within me turns to stone."

Then Paris said, "But we will not fly  
Like thieves that have heard a step draw nigh.  
You are the Queen and I am I;  
I'll carry you off to my golden ship  
At noonday under your husband's eye."

So it was planned, so it was done,  
Paris and she were there at one,  
The sentry bribed and the door undone,  
With a waiting ship and a rising wind  
Helen was off with Priam's son.

### THE GOING TO TROY

He took her to Troy, the windy town  
Where the exploit gave him great renown.  
Helen was bright as a golden crown.  
But Menelaus in Sparta swore:—  
"This shall topple their towers down."

Agamemnon, his brother, vowed:—  
"Troy shall be sacked that is so proud.  
The sites of her temples shall be ploughed.  
We have waited long, but the cup is brimmed,  
The glory of Asia shall be bowed."

By lying and threats and fraud and force  
He gathered his ships and spears and horse.  
As many as thorns on April gorse  
He sent them aboard in Argos Bay,  
And away to Troy they took their course.

But difficult fortunes wait on ships,  
For the winds may blow their sails to strips  
And the waves may knock their planks to chips,  
Or the wind may stop their going at all,  
And Death come salt on the seamen's lips.

It was not triumph and prize they found,  
But a wind that kept them harbour-bound  
Week after week in Kalkis Sound,  
Dying of fever, under a curse,  
Till a tenth were under the burial mound.

What did they do, that might avail  
To appease the gods that the ships might sail?  
A horror that makes the cheek turn pale,  
A horror that Agamemnon did:  
But the Queen herself shall tell the tale.

## KLYTAIMNESTRA

*(Enters.)*

I AM that Klytaimnestra whom Agamemnon wedded,  
Queen of a beautiful land in a city rich in gold.  
Would that my happy fortune might strike me suddenly dead.

The cause of the Trojan war was not Queen Helen,  
That lovely fool of a girl, with her painted boy,  
But lust for the spoil of the peaceful Trojan towns,  
And the vanity of Agamemnon, the King,  
Who raged, after all those years, because King Priam  
Was chosen to walk before him at Zeus's rites.  
Those children, drunken with youth, were but the pretext.

Such was the "righteous war" that my husband preached of.

And all the youth of all the cities and kingdoms  
Went at the bidding of Agamemnon to Troy.

We women and little children and aged men  
Were left behind to the work that the fighters left,

To raise the food and wine that the fighters wasted  
And forge the weapons to kill some woman's dear one.

Months passed by, with never a message, but orders  
To press more youths, to hurry them on to the war.  
And the youths marched singing away and none returned.

Never a message of love came, none, but rumours  
From each blind beggar that passed, of ruin and death.  
And the daily bread of our lives was pain of mind.

Then, after months, a herald came from my husband,  
Giving his ring as sign, speaking these very words:—

“The spearmen and all the ships are drawn in a port ashore,  
Waiting to fall on Troy when the Trojans least expect us.  
But, while we wait for the day,  
Fortune provides a means of linking our House of Atreus  
With the House of Peleus' self, that the Halves of Greece be  
linked,  
We plan that our Daughter Iphigénia be married  
To Achilles, Prince of Phthia, thus linking the kingdoms.  
Therefore, Queen, we will, that you send our Daughter to  
Aulis  
Under the guard we send, that so she may marry the prince.”

I sent my darling Daughter away to Aulis.

It was all a lie of the King's, from end to end;  
There was no marriage prepared; the fleet was wind-bound,  
Unable to sail for Troy, and the food was scarce,  
The camp was sickly, mutinous; quarrels were hot.  
My Husband knew, when he sent that message of lies,  
That within two weeks his League would dissolve in rage.  
So he schemed to kill my girl as a sacrifice,  
That the gods might change the wind and the fleet set sail.

My Daughter went with the guards, thinking she went to be  
bride.  
They say that her Father smiled, that his plot had thriven  
so well.

She was decked as they deck cows, she was bound as they bind  
beasts,  
And he and his filthy priests prayed loud to the gods to hear;  
And a thousand men stood near; not one of them lifted hand;  
In the light, on the sea-sand, he killed his child with a prayer.  
And after he burned her there, and took an oath at her dust  
That all should be faith and trust, since brotherly love was  
best.

And the wind swung round to the west; they shouted there  
in their joy.  
They left a poor little tomb behind on the trampled beach.  
With singing and merry speech those heroes sailed towards  
Troy.

If there be any Curse, Fury or Evil  
Able to leap from the Hurt Heart, to follow  
The causer of the Hurt, and grapple, biting  
Until the Fangs have riven his very life,  
Let such curse follow Agamemnon always  
And all his men.

Open, you kennels of Hell,  
Come all you hounds of hell, red-eared, red-eyed,  
Come Quarrel, Insult, Outrage, Misery, Shame,  
Come lolling-tongued, tireless, hellish-hearted,  
Hunt them down shrieking to untimely Death.

This hatred is but misery, daylong, nightlong.  
Vengeance will not bring back my little daughter.  
Would that a happy fortune would strike me dead!

### THE SPEARMAN

You have heard the lady, making her complaints.  
I was at Aulis: the gods were angry with us:  
They had to be appeased by the King's child.  
When that was done, at once the whole curse lifted,  
The gods were with us, we sailed, we were successful.

We sacked the little cities in league with Troy.  
Then we landed in force three miles from Troy,



Drew up our ships and fenced them with ditch and wall.  
We learned, later, that Hektor, Priam's son,  
Urged that all Troy should fall on us with fire  
Then, while we dug; but old fools in the council  
Caused Priam to refuse: lucky for us.  
One good attack, pushed then, would have destroyed us.

And afterwards our state was none too safe.  
The pestilence that had begun at Aulis  
Began again, and raged, and the Kings quarrelled.  
Chances were missed and foolish chances taken  
That ended ill: there was much bitterness.

It was a working life there, sieging Troy.  
Sometimes we went on foray with the horse,  
And gathered cattle, corn and wine and oil.  
That was delightful to a lad at first.  
But later, when the plunder had grown scarce,  
And every raider had to fight for it,  
Going, and gathering, and getting home,  
It was rough service: needing many men.  
Yet necessary service, for we starved else.

And when, after a night march and a raid,  
And running fighting, driving back the cattle,  
We entered camp, perhaps a gang from Troy  
Would shoot into the camp and fire a ship.  
Then out the parties had to go again,  
To drive the bowmen back and quench the fire.  
And when the darkness came we stood to arms  
And slept upon our arms under our wall,  
Those who were lucky: many watched, as sentries.

Then there was work: an everlasting work,  
Mending the palisades, digging the ditches.  
Digging the clearance channels after rain,  
Unloading ships that brought us stores or horses,  
Taking the horses to the tanks for water;  
Going up river to cut forage for them,  
And bearing back the forage under spear-shot.  
Building and mending huts, bringing in wood,  
Wood for the forges, wood for ship repair,

Barricades, palisades and burial pyres.  
And daily fights and frequent night alarms;  
And many night patrols and constant danger,  
On scanty food and bad, in stench and flies;  
Many men dying, very many sick,  
None really well, and always in the need  
Of showing we were longing for a battle.

Often they marched us to the city walls  
"To show that we defied them," as they said.  
It only made us envy them the more  
Snug in their homes within the walls of Troy,  
Singing (we heard them singing) and contemptuous.

Had they attacked us then, with all their strength . . .

And yet we hoped and longed to capture Troy,  
To break them in a battle and so enter.  
But with our quarrelling Kings what chance had we?

The prince Achilles quarrelled with Agamemnon  
And would not fight, which meant, one third of us  
Sulked in the tents, yes, even while the Trojans  
Stormed over-thwart the wall to burn the ships.

For while Achilles sulked, the Trojan King  
Put Hektor in command of all his host;  
And then we suffered: night and day they raided,  
Penning us into camp: and blazing arrows  
Fell everywhere to set the ships afire.  
And then all Troy burst on us and burst in;  
They filled the ditch, they broke the wall, they entered  
Right into camp; they killed men in the ships.

Had they but had another hundred men  
And one half hour of summer daylight more,  
They would have finished every man of us.  
It was as near as that. The darkness saved us.

Yet still Achilles sulked, with all his tribe.

He would have carried all his sulkers home,  
Meant to, prepared to, but his friend was killed,  
A fine young fellow, I forget his name.  
I met him once. He ventured out too far,  
The Trojans got about him and so killed him  
And took his armour.

Had they let him go,  
I verily believe they would have won.  
Achilles would have gone with all his men  
And we without him should have had to go.  
But no, they killed him: and Achilles' rage  
Was like the fury of a god: he went  
Straight against Troy, and slew and slew and slcw,  
Raging for vengeance, till he met with Hektor  
And killed him underneath the walls of Troy.

And Hektor's death was blessed joy to us  
And grief to them, but fortune changes face  
Quickly in war: only a few days later  
The Trojans killed Achilles in an ambush.  
Our luck was gone that day and theirs was in.  
We thought "Now Agamemnon will make peace."

And on that very night the Trojan Paris,  
Who caused the war by bearing off Queen Helen,  
Was killed patrolling at the Skaian Gate.  
We said "Now this will certainly bring peace.  
Helen will be returned to Menelaus."

The King sent into Troy suggesting peace  
On that one point, that Helen be returned.  
But young Deiphobus, Prince Paris' brother,  
Said "No. I swore to Paris to save Helen  
From Menelaus always, come what may.  
And so I will: she is my wife henceforth.  
And Troy and I will keep her against all men."

He took command in Troy and stopped all thought  
Of peace or treaty: so our Herald told us.

And Agamemnon knew that he was beaten.  
For what with pestilence and mutiny,

His want of wit, and winter coming on,  
There was no taking Troy.

For, friends, remember,  
Troy was a miracle of strength, with walls  
Built by the gods themselves, as they maintained.

It was not so: they tricked Egyptian builders  
To come to build them, and then cheated them.  
But still, the walls were wonders of the world.

They were great, sloping walls of masonry  
Twenty feet high, and on the top there stood  
Twelve feet of upright rampart in addition.  
Thirty-two feet of wall stood everywhere  
All round the city, with square flanking towers  
Jutting at intervals on every length.  
Impossible to storm: we tried it once  
And not one stormer of us reached the top.  
Impossible to batter to a breach,  
We had not men enough to do the work.  
We and the ramparts being what they were,  
We could not capture Troy, and knew we could not.

And so we growled, on this side mutiny,  
While the Kings quarrelled, and the summer burned.

We did not know the truth till afterwards.  
This is what happened. Agamemnon called  
A council of the Kings most secretly  
Where they debated: "How to leave with honour,  
Without disgrace, without a mutiny,  
Troy being takeless and the winter coming."

Some were for crazy deed or crazy flight,  
And Nestor wished that he were young again,  
His usual wish, at more than usual length;  
And nothing was decided in the end.

But when the Kings had gone, Odysseus said:  
"Take this suggestion, mighty Agamemnon:  
Send word to Troy that the Troy god Apollo  
Has come to you in dream and ordered you

To end the war with Priam and begone:  
That, before sailing, you and yours must make  
An image of Apollo's sacred Horse  
Precious with bronze and gold, in expiation  
Of Greek pollution on Troy's holy soil.  
That this great image should be left to Trojans  
To drag into the city to the shrine  
Of great Apollo.

That within few days,  
Soon as this image has been wrought and decked,  
You and your allies will break camp and sail.  
That, in the meantime, all your Trojan prisoners  
Will be released at once without a ransom.

For thus," he said, "you gain a holy warrant  
For doing what you have to do, go home.  
Epeios and myself will make the Horse.  
Send you to Troy the message I have bidden,  
Send it by all your prisoners released,  
And tell the allies here that bright Apollo  
Commands us to withdraw. So trust Apollo."

Odysseus had his will: the King agreed.

So Agamemnon called his Trojan prisoners,  
Told them what bright Apollo had commanded,  
Promised the Horse, and sent them back to Troy  
With gifts for each: and we were bidden launch  
The ships into the sea, ready to sail.  
And we were thankful to be going thence.

Then only, when Apollo's will was known  
To Greeks and Trojans, was Odysseus' will  
Made known to Agamemnon.

"King," he said,  
Inside the Horse we'll hide our champions.  
The Horse will go into Apollo's temple:  
The men will wait within him until cockcrow:  
Then creep out of the Horse down to the gate,  
Murder the keepers of it and unbar.  
Our host, come secretly ashore again,  
Shall be outside, ready to enter in.

The Trojans will be taken by surprise,  
Utterly startled without will or way  
They will surrender: we shall sack the city."

Men without plan succumb to any plan:  
The King agreed to all Odysseus' plan.

Others will tell you of the Horse: myself  
Only just saw him as I went aboard.  
He was a stalwart stallion, plated over  
With bronze and gold, upon a frame with wheels.

We left him in the ruins of our camp  
And so set sail away from windy Troy.  
What happened later, I will tell you later:  
The story of the Horse waits to be told.

### THE HORSE

My Father, King Epeios of the Islands,  
Fashioned the Horse, after Odysseus' plan.  
His shipwrights helped: this was the fashion of it:

The body of the horse was a hooped hollow  
Of staves of wood, shaped to the horse's shape.  
Within it, on each side, and at the chest  
Were seats, covered with fleeces against noise,  
To take five men, close-sitting, two a side  
Bent forward somewhat, and the fifth at end  
Who sat more upright since his head had space  
Within the horse's neck.

The entry hatch  
Was in the beast's back, bolted from within  
And covered with a saddle-piece of gold.

All this was made most secretly, unknown  
By any, save Odysseus and my Father,  
Who worked in a locked hut, under a guard,  
"The work," they said, "being consecrate to god."

The pinewood workers made neck, head and legs.  
Then all the parts were tenoned to each other  
And treenailed fast, and shod to the wheeled stand,  
Then the rough wood was polished with sea-sand  
As smooth as ivory; then bronze workers  
Plated the wood with bronze from battle gear  
And ran fine goldwork over all the seams,  
And horse-hair helmet-plumes made mane and tail.

When done, he seemed to march like a proud stallion  
Bitted and decked, with an erect crest arched.

Then, when the Horse was finished, the five men  
Were picked to go within: Odysseus, captain:  
It was his plan; and he had been in Troy  
A dozen times, dressed as a beggar, spying.  
Next, Menelaus, as Queen Helen's husband,  
The man with bitterest grievance against Troy.  
Next, Neoptolemus, Achilles' son,  
Longing to avenge his father, newly killed.  
Next, Sthenelus, our best, after Achilles.  
Lastly, my Father, who had made the Horse,  
And claimed to share its fortunes.

All these five

From gazing at the City, and from study  
Of a model of the city walls and ways  
Wrought by Odysseus out of river clay,  
Learned all the alleys to the southern gate  
That they would open . . . if their Fortune held.

My Father said: "I felt like to a swimmer  
Who has betted all his having on the point  
That he will swim a rapid, without harm,  
And then, in the cold morning, sees the torrent  
That he is pledged to swim, all jagged rocks  
And gliddery boulders, antlers of dead trees,  
Whirlpools and waterfalls and water-snakes,  
Spikes, and a rushing shriek of bloated water,  
Mangling and horrid death in every yard,  
And dreadful hags of water with grey arms  
Tossing to pluck him to their yellow teeth;  
And wishes himself far, or the deed over . . .

But still," he said, "Odysseus never doubted.  
Odysseus said: "I answer for success  
If once the Trojans bring us through the gates."

His captaincy turned doubt into a Hope,  
And what the Hope became, another tells.

## STHENELUS' DAUGHTER

## THE ENTRY INTO TROY

KING STHENELUS, my Father, has often told me  
The adventure of the Horse: I tell as he told.

"When the time came to put it to the proof,  
Only we five and Agamemnon knew  
What had been planned: then Diomed was told.

When the Greeks struck the camp and launched the ships,  
We five went openly aboard a ship;  
We said that we were bound to holy Chrysa,  
To sacrifice to great Apollo there.  
Men cheered us as we went and thought us gone.

But when we were beyond the Point, we landed,  
And slept until a little before dawn,  
When we returned unseen to Agamemnon,  
And stole into the stable of the Horse.

There we anointed, prayed, and saw all ready  
And took a meal together cheerfully,  
Since it might be our last. Odysseus ordered  
King Menelaus to the Horse's neck,  
Himself to the King's right, me to the left,  
Epeios on my left, facing the boy.  
We waited for King Agamemnon's signal.

At the appointed time the trumpeters  
Blew the long blast to bid the Greeks aboard.  
There came a long long cheer and grating of pebbles,



And cheering and still more cheering.

We five shook hands

And said good-bye to light and clambered in.

When we were in our seats Odysseus drew

The cunning lid across and bolted it.

We were in darkness then, like five men buried.

Should we ever see the light of day again?

Then we heard Agamemnon at the hut,  
Bidding men strike it: this was swiftly done.

Some glimmer of the daylight came to us.

Then workers felt about the Horse's body,

Fixing his golden trappings with small pins.

Then Agamemnon said: 'This Argive Horse

Is offered to Apollo's Trojan shrine.

We pray that Troy receive it and admit it

Within the shrine: and that it bring to Troy

The blessings that we pray for her: so be it.'

We heard him spill the wine in the libation;

Then the men muttered prayers: then the King

Ordered 'About, turn. March. Aboard your ships.'

We heard the singing as they hoisted sail,

The cries of men heaving: the splash of oars:

The griding, rib on rib, the oaths and cheering:

And the crackle of the flames from the great bonfire

Of burning hut-wood well to leeward from us.

The noise of our friends' cheering slowly died,

We knew ourselves alone within the camp.

And then a crow perched on the Horse's head

And cawed and flapped, and cried an eager cry

Seeing a morsel, and with creaked wings went.

Then seagulls perched upon the Horse together:

They talked their sea speech as they preened themselves;

Then, after shifting leg for leg, they slept

There in the sun above us, while the heat

Grew greater in the oven where we were.

We five were packed into a narrow space

With fresh air only from the Horse's nostrils:

Outside the sun was beating on the wood  
In full midsummer. We had taken oath  
Never to speak, but suffer silently  
Whatever came: we panted: the sweat trickled.

Being so shut away, we could not tell  
How long we had endured or had to suffer:  
It seemed another life since the ships sailed.  
Then suddenly Odysseus put his hand  
Upon my knee: he had heard horses coming.

They were the Trojan chariots drawing near.

Our hearts thumped: the adventure had begun.

Then, as the horses and the chariots halted,  
One of their stallions whinnied at our Horse.  
We heard the men leap down to hold the teams  
And the harness jingling, as the horses tossed.  
Then Priam and the princes came about us.

And first they praised the beauty of the work.  
'It was a well-made Horse, handsomely decked.'  
But then one or two voices, which Odysseus,  
Who knew Troy well, could recognise, not I,  
Asked, 'Why should Agamemnon leave a Horse  
Instead of gold or beasts for sacrifice?'  
But Priam said: 'The god appeared to him;  
Apollo's self ordered a Horse's image.'  
One said: 'He bears at least ten pounds of gold.'

We heard the princes comment on our fleet  
Now sailing past the Point to Tenedos.  
And citizens of Troy came round the Horse  
And stared and wondered at him; many praised.  
They dared not touch, thinking him consecrated.  
We heard them poking in the sites of huts  
For relics of our stay, to carry home,  
Spear-heads and arrow-heads and armour buckles.  
Then Priam and the princes came again.  
Then Priam put his hands upon the Horse  
And shook, to test if it were strongly fixed.

He said: 'It is well made and heavy. Feel it.  
The body must be made of solid wood.'  
He tapped the body, but the plate and trappings  
Made the blow dull. He could not prove it hollow.

We heard them bring up teams and waggon-traces,  
Four teams were harnessed to the float, and men  
Stood to side-traces and to guiding-traces,  
Then, as the sweat came pouring down our faces,  
We felt our prison moving towards Troy.

We were able to forget the heat a little  
In the thought of what might meet us on the way.  
My thought was, 'If the Horse break from its stand  
Or stick within the river at the ford . . .  
Or fall and break asunder in the ford . . .'  
But we had set ourselves upon the chance  
And had to take what came.

It often happens  
That a thing dreaded ere it come, is nothing  
In the doing when it comes. We crossed the ford,  
Scarce knowing we were there.

Long hours seemed to pass, then, suddenly,  
There came a blast of trumpets and a cry,  
A long wild cry of cheering and exaltation:  
We were below the gate: the citizens  
Had crowded to the ramparts. We were there.

Here we were halted while they took the horses  
And changed the traces for long ropes of leather,  
Then all Troy's strongest, singing all together,  
Hauled, and the girls flung flowers, pipers blew  
Apollo's hymn, and so the Trojans drew  
The Horse within the Waggon Gate of Troy.

Then our wheels rumbled on the paven ways  
Up a steep slope: and ever hymns of praise

With lyres and with cymbals greeted us.  
We went with music and with singing thus  
Round all the city (to our seeming) thrice.  
At the third round we thought: "The sacrifice  
Will follow this; shall we be burnt, or thrown  
Over the walls to break upon the stone?"

We halted: then the singers ceased their song.  
We felt that all about us was a throng  
Of men and women pressing, touching, peering . . .

The heralds of the Trojans called a hearing.  
When there was silence old King Priam spoke.  
He was so near, we felt his left hand stroke  
The Horse's neck and pat it when he paused."

My sister here shall tell you what he said.

### THE TROJANS ABOUT THE HORSE

"APOLLO's self commanded Agamemnon  
To make this image for the Trojan shrine,  
In expiation of the long pollution  
Of all Apollo's land by acts of war.  
Here is the image, and the Greeks are gone  
South of the headland, bound for Tenedos.  
Now you, the elders, priestesses and priests,  
Debate here in the council, and decide  
What shall be done with this. There are three courses:  
Bring it within Apollo's temple here,  
Burn it with holy fire where it stands,  
Or fling it from the ramparts to the rocks.  
I urge that it be placed within the temple,  
As bright Apollo bade the Argive King."

After a moment's pause another spoke:  
"This city wants no offering from the Greeks.  
This that the Greeks have made has been received.  
I move that it be offered now to God  
With holy fire, even where it stands.

When it is ashes, let us take the ashes  
And fling them from the city to the wind,  
And so be done with Greeks and offerings."

Another said: "We cannot understand  
Why anyone should bring an Argive image  
Into this city. We have suffered much  
Since the first Argive image entered Troy.  
We have her still, and suffer from the having.  
I say let Princess Helen mount the horse  
And ride on him over the walls to hell.  
Later, when we have tilled the fields again,  
Replanted all our vineyards, stocked our byres,  
And put aside the memory of our sons  
Dead in this war for Helen and her boy,  
We may forget a little what we owe  
To Agamemnon and his company.  
At present we owe death to him and his,  
And I say smash this image into fragments,  
Here or upon the rocks below the walls."

And instantly the mob assailed the Horse  
With tooth and hand, and would have torn it piecemeal  
But for the press and the beasts's size and strength.  
But heavy blows fell on the beast, and hands  
Snatched at the trappings, and a woman screamed  
"Tear it to pieces, put it in the fire!"

We felt that we were ended, without hope.

Then, just as the Horse tottered under press,  
There came something that made our blood run cold,  
And checked the raging of those wolves of Troy  
With horror.

There came a cry like mad laughter or weeping,  
A sobbing like one laughing over a corpse.  
And the mob froze, and people shrank aside,  
Horror had put her hand on everyone.  
It was the worst thing that we suffered there.

## KASSANDRA

I WAS the thing they heard, I am Cassandra.  
I am as one blind from too much light.  
The pure air, the pure light and the pure fire  
And the ecstasy that comes, considering these,  
Are all my having. All else is touched with Death.

I saw that golden Horse, Apollo's Horse,  
With all those Deaths about Him in Troy Town.  
Men with their carrion arms and bloodstained hands,  
And the skeleton fingers of the women stretched  
And the skulls of all, all gibbering, showing teeth,  
All rotting, all Death, about Apollo's Horse,  
The stallion of Pure Fire on which He rides.  
O terrible pollution, those living dead.

So I crept among them . . . and I am like the Light,  
Death shrinks away from me, those shrank away . . .  
I touched Apollo's Horse and instantly  
Light came to me: I spoke the Light, the Truth.

This is Apollo's Horse. Take off your hands  
From this immortal work and holy gold.

This Wood is from the Holy Grove of Ida,  
Where nothing mortal comes on foot or wing  
Nor crawls, for it is lifeless, save for trees,  
Pine trees immense, together, ever-living,  
A forest of the pine trees, nothing else,  
Only the dark green trees, murmuring wisdom,  
Daylong murmuring wisdom like the sea.

But at night, lo, they are mountain goddesses  
Singing by moonlight terrible songs of god. . . .  
This Wood is of their Flesh, Goddesses' Flesh.

This Bronze, that was the armour of dead men,  
Has since been through the fire, Apollo's fire,  
The purity of fire has made it deathless.

This Gold is from the inmost mountain glen  
Beyond all Life whatever, beyond all noise,  
Save sometimes the rocks crack and the stones fall.

All day the rocks stand up among the glare,  
All night they face the frost, the moon, the stars;  
Not even the shadow of a cloud dare cross there.

And in its secrecy a water trickles  
Out of the rock, the purest, brightest water,  
Into a pool whose sand is dust of gold.  
And there Apollo plunges from the rock.

This Gold is from Apollo's wing-feathers.

And Apollo will come into Troy at sunrise  
To claim his Horse and ride: I see him riding  
Bright, bright, bright, through the city . . .

O so bright . . .

Bright as pure gold: I see him riding here,  
Brighter than gold, like something in a flame . . .  
Yes, he will ride like fire, bright fire in Troy,  
And, yes, the fire will redden as red as blood,  
These ways, these walls, these towers, will glow like sunset,  
A ruby of red, an ember, all heart's blood spilt.  
And roaring fire will raven and lightnings sear.

His sword will bring bright death upon all of Troy;  
O joy, joy, joy, when Apollo rides the ways.

Bring precious gums, bring gold,  
The cobwebbed winejar old,  
The pure work of the bees,  
And Indian spice,  
Bring milk, barley, and oil,  
Bring salt, ashes and soil;  
Gather all these.  
We have a god to please,  
Apollo to appease,  
With sacrifice.

And strew down Indian silks, green silks, all woven  
With sunbirds in gold thread, at the bright feet  
That soon shall trample fire from the street  
And dart his lightnings till the Wall be cloven.  
Apollo shall come riding into Troy,  
O joy, O joy.

Friends, beautiful Apollo tells me this:  
That I shall ride on this immortal Horse  
Far, far from Troy, in triumph, like a Queen,  
Past lions, up a stair all strewn with purple  
Straight into fire . . .  
Straight to my lover Apollo waiting for me.

### STHENELUS' DAUGHTER

#### IN THE HORSE, TILL SUNSET

THAT was the voice those hidden in the Horse heard.

She strayed back, lightly singing, to the temple.  
My Father said, "Even within the Horse,  
We felt the horror of those shrinking from her,  
That priestess whom the god loved and had maddened.

After her song had ceased, King Priam said  
'Draw this into the temple, as god bids.'

The men tautened the ropes to drag us in,  
Starting a hymn, when a fierce voice behind us  
Cried: 'I'll not welcome any Greekish gift;  
Never. Let Agamemnon's Horse take that!'

And crash, a spear struck in the Horse's side,  
Cracking the bronze and sticking in the wood.  
Men wrenched it out and beat the flinger with it.

'Put him in bonds,' King Priam said: 'Sing on.  
Bring bright Apollo's Horse into his home.'



We knew that we were dragged out of the light  
Into a dimness sweet with burning gums.  
We stopped: our dragging team unhooked the traces  
And quietly went from us upon tiptoe:  
We were within the temple: we were there.

Sweating and stifling as we were, we felt  
Thanksgiving at our greatest danger over.  
Fear having died, the hope of victory  
Began to grow: our chance seemed to be coming.

The priests gathered about us with their incense.

Outside the temple there was still a crowd  
Of men and women jabbering together.  
Street-singers sang, and then the crowd would listen:  
Street jokers, mountebanks and public mimics  
Mimicked and mocked, and then the crowd would laugh,  
And then a man whose comrade had been killed,  
And a half-mad woman, cried aloud again  
For lovely dead lads lying in the rain,  
And rage leaped up against the Greekish gift,  
And grew, till the priests closed the brazen doors  
And drew the bars: and then the rabble beat  
Beat on the doors, crying, 'Have out that image.'

There was a passage from King Priam's palace  
Into the temple. Priam's spearman came  
Into the temple by it as a guard.

And presently they cleared the crowd away  
And kept the precincts free: we heard them pacing,  
Shifting their spears, grounding their spear-butts, calling  
'Stand back there, you. Keep back there. Stand away.'  
Little boys shouted mockings and then fled,  
And spearmen leaned their spears against the Horse:  
They diced and joked and told each other stories.  
One mounted on the Horse and switched and cried:—  
'Get up now. Watch us gallop for the Cup.'  
And we, half stifled in the Horse, were glad  
Of anything that passed the time or showed  
That time was passing. But the thought occurred

'What if these spearmen watch us all night long?  
What if they sleep here, all about the Horse,  
And take us as we open?'

But for that

We had small fear: the heat and the discomfort  
And knowledge of the hours still to pass  
Ere we could hope to stir, were pain enough,  
We would face the other trouble when it came

Then singing priests bore offerings in procession,  
Men, women, and children came with gifts.  
Kassandra took them. She offered them to god.  
There was some little riot near the doors  
During all this, but the guards silenced it.  
Kassandra and the offerers withdrew;  
The hours began again, of waiting, waiting.

The hours passed, leaving not even misery.  
After long hours, it was sunset time:  
We heard the water-sellers in the streets  
Blowing their gurgling bird-calls and then crying  
'Water; fresh Xanthus water; crystal water.  
Fresh water from the Idan springs; so cold.  
A penny the double-pitcher, but worth gold '

It would have seemed worth minted gold to us.

One brought it to our sentries in the temple.

Then from the towers came the cry of 'Sunset'.  
And trumpets blew the Closing of the Gates.  
And every bell in Troy jangled or chimed  
And children cheered: and women called to supper:  
And men came thronging home: and shops were shut:  
And the hammers that had beaten on the anvil  
Since we reached Troy, were silent, we thanked god.  
And almost instantly a coolness came,  
And in the silence that fell suddenly  
We heard again the never-ceasing wind  
Running in every cranny, shaking shutters,  
Flinging the dust against the masonry,  
The wind of Troy, that blows all summer long."

## IN THE HORSE, SUNSET TILL COCKCROW

"THEN, to our joy, quick steps came up the courtyard,  
A voice cried, 'Come, fall in, the First and Third.  
Back to the Palace with you, into quarters.  
The Second Watch will guard here until midnight.'

Then two out of the three watches of guards  
Formed, and marched off: the third undid their cloaks  
And slept upon the floor: all save two men,  
A sentry, marching: and a sergeant pacing.  
Sometimes the couple talked together there  
(Leaning upon the Horse) of wine and women.

At the second changing of the sentinel  
The priests entered with lights and sang their song  
How beautiful Apollo sailed the sea  
In a red ship, into the midnight lands,  
But soon would turn, and drive his flaming horses  
Up from the world's rim, bringing light again.

Then, as they ceased their hymn, Cassandra came.  
She stood beside the Horse next to Odysseus.  
She said: 'The Trojan people are gone mad,  
Quite mad, to bring this Horse into the City.  
They should have burned it in the Argive camp,  
Or burned it here, or flung it from the walls.  
Apollo tells me truly; it brings Death,  
A fivefold Death into the City's heart.  
Death of the Man, Death of the Woman and Child,  
Death of the Home they made, Death of the City.  
Apollo says, *the image should be burnt*  
*Even if it scream, like burnt men, in the burning;*  
*As it will scream,* he says.

Will you not burn it?

'No,' the men said, 'the orders are precise . . .  
To bring it here and guard it, until midnight.'

'But Apollo bids me say *it must be burned.*'

'Go, tell King Priam so, priestess,' they said.

'King Priam has forbidden me the palace  
Because I am a priestess consecrate.  
Go, tell him, you.'

'We have strict orders, priestess,  
Not to disturb King Priam before dawn.  
When the King wakes he shall be told at once.'

She seemed to ponder this in agony.  
Then she cried: 'Telling him at dawn will be  
Too late for Troy: Apollo tells me truth.  
I see nothing but burning: nothing but Death.'

Then, suddenly, Cassandra struck the Horse  
And cried: 'I name the fivefold Death within.  
Odysseus, King of craft, hater of Troy;  
Menelaus, who let Helen loose upon us;  
Epeios, the contriver of the Image;  
Neoptolemus, avenger of Achilles;  
And Sthenelus, the Red-with-Trojan-blood.  
These are the Deaths: Apollo cries *Destroy them.*'

She then went slowly back into the darkness,  
Wailing *Destroy them. Burn the image now.*

When she had gone, the priests muttered their pity.  
The spearmen murmured: then the captain said:—  
'You priests ought to be guided by a warning,  
Given by god, you ought to waken Priam  
And tell him that the image must be burned.'

A priest replied: 'Kassandra has gone mad.  
We cannot waken Priam for such madness.  
He has forbidden us to listen to her,  
Apollo speaks through the bright brain of man  
Not through the clouded.'

Then the priests withdrew.

When they had gone, the captain said: 'And yet  
I am for taking warnings sent by god.  
I say we ought to send to tell the King.'

The guard agreed that Priam should be waked:  
But who should wake that turbulent old King  
Against his urgent orders: no man dared.  
'But still,' the captain said, 'he should be told' . . .

While they debated, sentries on the towers  
Blew a soft trumpet call and voices cried,  
'It is now a rainless midnight and All's well'.

'Cease watch,' the captain said. 'To quarters. March.'

Those spearman of the temple stood to arms,  
Clashed their bronze spear-butts on the temple floor,  
Shifted and turned and marched away from us:  
And silence fell.

We listened. All was still.  
Then wise Odysseus swiftly drew the bolt  
And thrust the hatchway up. 'Come on,' he said.  
'Those men will waken Priam and return  
And burn the Horse: we have a moment's truce.'

He clambered out, we others after him,  
So cramped, so stifled, we could hardly do it.  
Odysseus snatched the weapons and the fleeces,  
Reclosed the hatch, recovered it with trappings,  
And whispered, 'Follow me: utter no sound.'

He led us deep into the temple's darkness.  
There, at the north-east angle was a ladder;  
He led us up it to a gallery,  
Doubtless the passage to the treasure room.  
'Drink, everyone,' he said, 'then lie and stretch.'

We drank the lukewarm water from our bottles  
And stretched and felt new life come into us.

We had not lain five minutes at our ease  
Before the guards returned, dragged out the Horse,  
Smashed it with axes in the temple close  
And brought out blazing straw and burned it there.  
Odysseus' wisdom saved us, barely saved us.

The fire from the Horse lighted the temple.  
We saw the glare and people dodging by  
Screening their eyes: within an hour it died,  
Though smoke from smouldering embers blew about.  
I was so weary that I slept: all slept  
Except Odysseus: he kept watch for us.  
And in my sleep I knew that Troy was quiet,  
That danger was all past, or not yet come,  
That of a hundred chances, ninety blest us,  
And that the long long trouble of the war,  
The toil, the watching, hunger, danger, death,  
Loss of dear comrades, all these things, might end,  
Soon end, in Victory, the lovely thing,  
The spirit with the crown coming from Heaven,  
Life after all that Death, Life, Life itself,  
The Sun climbing aloft out of the Night.

And lo, in the dark rafters over us,  
Within an unseen roost, Apollo's Herald,  
A cock half-rousing, flapped his wings and crowed,  
Crowed for the Sun still far under the rim  
Of the dark land beyond Mount Ida there.  
We waked at that clear summons of the cock.

'Come on,' Odysseus said. He led the way  
Down, through the temple, through the open doors  
Into the close, where still the embers smouldered,  
And cats glided, and little Troy lay sleeping.

### THE SURPRISE

You have heard the story of the Horse of Troy.

We left him on the sea-beach when we sailed.  
We sailed all day, but when the darkness fell  
The captains ordered all the fleet ashore.  
We beached the black ships out of sight of Troy.

Then quietly the captains of the hundreds  
Were told that a surprise would be attempted.

Orders were given: then most stringent watch  
Was made, lest any traitor should give warning.

We supped and slept, till somewhere after midnight,  
Then roused, and tied bleached linen on our arms,  
And took short spears and swords: no other weapons:  
And forth we went by fifties towards Troy.  
Absolute silence upon pain of death  
The order was, we crept along like ghosts.

Soon we were in the Plain among the graves  
Of men half-buried, whom we used to know,  
And how they died, a dozen known to me.  
And Trojan bodies, too; familiar landmarks.

It was all cold and windy, with bright stars,  
No moon, dry summer going, and the wind  
Beating the withered grass and shrivelled leaves.  
Then we were at the ford and passing through  
I remember water gurgling at a flag-root.

Beyond the ford we were in Trojan land.  
There was the black mass of the walls of Troy  
With towers (and a light in one of them).  
No other sign of life, except a glow,  
Before Apollo's temple as we judged,  
Some sacrificial fire not yet quenched.  
The city was dead still, but for the wind.

They halted us below the waggon track  
Between the Spartans and the Ithacans,  
And there we huddled in the bitter cold,  
Wondering what had happened in the city  
And why the city should be still as death:  
Whether the Horse were burning in the fire  
With all our men inside it sacrificed:  
Whether the trap door in the Horse had jammed  
So that they could not leave it: or perhaps  
(We thought) the Horse is guarded in the temple,  
Surrounded by men praying all night long.  
Or had they ventured out, and all been killed?

And if the men were killed, the stratagem  
Was surely known, and we half-armed and freezing,  
Would be attacked at dawn and ridden down.

A temple bell jangled within the city,  
A lesser bell tinkled; then all was silent.

And all this time the little owls from Ida  
Came hooting over us: and presently  
A mighty, savage owl perched upon Troy  
And snapped his iron lips, and flapped, and screamed,  
Almost one saw the yellow of his eyes.  
Then he launched forth, stealing into the air.

It seemed like many ages in the cold  
Before the whisper reached the Ithacans  
To creep a little nearer to the wall.  
When they had passed, unchallenged, others went.  
Word passed that there were sentries on the wall.

And though the orders were against all speech,  
Yet whispers let us know that Diomed  
Was at the South Gate underneath the tower,  
With the picked fighters.

Hours seemed to pass  
While we froze slowly in our companies.  
My eyes were so accustomed to the dark  
That I could see the great wall with its ramparts,  
A tower, and a gate, close-fastened, brazen,  
With men of ours heaped near it like to stones.

Then there was whispering in the ranks behind me:  
A captain whispered, "Who knows Diomed?  
Do you?" I whispered, "Yes."

"Why, then," he whispered,  
"Creep forward there, and find him by the gate  
Under the tower with the forward party.  
Tell him *King Agamemnon is convinced*  
*That this has failed, and that we must withdraw.*  
*Be ready to fall back as we retire."*



I crept the seventy yards up to the front,  
One whispered, "Diomed is on the right,  
Nearest the wall." I found him lying there  
And whispered him the message of the King.  
"What?" he said. "What? Withdraw from where we are?  
Who says so? What authority have you?"  
I told him "Verbal orders from a captain."  
"Lie still," he said. "And not another word.  
I'll learn of your authority when day dawns."  
I lay prone on the earth, close at the gate.

Then suddenly there came a little noise.  
Someone within the gate was lifting down  
The heavy bars that barred it, one by one.  
Each of us nudged his fellow and drew breath.  
Diomed stood: we others raised ourselves.

One half the narrow brazen door moved back,  
Showing a dark gash that grew wider and lighter;  
A lamp wavered and flickered in a lane,  
The damp glistened on wallwork; a man peered  
Round the half-opened door; and "Sst. Sst. Sst.,"  
He hissed. It was Odysseus, from the Horse.

Diomed signalled to us: he himself  
Was first within the gate: I helped him there  
To lay the gate wide open to our men.  
Then we pressed in, up the steep narrow lane  
Past the still flickering lamp, over a Trojan  
Sentry or watchman, newly murdered there,  
Killed by Odysseus: no one challenged us.  
We were in Troy: the city was surprised.

The dogs had all been killed some weeks before,  
There were no watch-dogs. When we reached the Ways,  
The Wide Ways running round within the walls,  
Some horses, tethered there, whinnied and stamped,  
And drowsy horse-boys mumbled in their sleep,  
But no one challenged; Troy was in a drowse  
In the deep morning sleep before the dawn  
Now faint upon the distant tops of Ida.

And we were seen by watchmen on the tower  
On that side Troy, but none of them suspected  
That we were Greeks: they thought that we were Lycians,  
Old allies of the Trojans, mustering  
Up to the temples for a sacrifice  
Before we marched from Troia to our homes.

We were within the second ring of road,  
Outside King Priam's palace and the temples,  
Before a sentry challenged us, and then  
It was too late for the alarm to help.  
The man paused at the turning of his beat,  
Looked round and saw us, gave a cry, then challenged,  
Then died, stabbed through the throat by Diomed.

My party rushed into Apollo's temple  
And burst into the palace to the guards  
Sleeping in quarters, some of them half drunk,  
All without arms: we herded them like sheep.

And by the time the guards were bound, the city  
Was lit with blazing thatches, and awake,  
Dawn coming, fire burning, women screaming,  
And war-cries, and loud trumpets and clashed armour.  
There was hard fighting in a dozen spots.

We came out of the guard-room by a gate  
Into a blaze all red with fire flying:  
A palace court it was, the inner court,  
Where Menelaus and his Spartan spearmen  
Were killing Priam's sons.  
Just as we reached the court a dozen spearmen  
Were all attacking young Deiphobus.

I knew the lad by sight, for he had come  
On embassy to Agamemnon once,  
And Menelaus meant to have him killed  
And flung to the camp-dogs, because of Helen.

There he was, fighting for his life with twelve.

A fine young man, like Hektor in the face,  
A bright, clean-cut face, tanned with sun and wind,  
Smiling and cool and swift with parry on parry.

He had been surprised: he had no body-armour,  
Nothing but spear and shield, and there he stood,  
Checking each thrust, swift, marvellously.

One minute

He stood, matchless in skill in the red glare,  
Then someone crept above and stabbed him down.

The city was all ours in the hour.  
Many were killed in fighting: many more  
Escaped, during the burning and confusion,  
Out of the city by the Eastern gate.  
The rest we took: some of the prisoners,  
The little children and old men and women,  
We drove out of the city to the mountains.  
The rest we kept; young women skilled in crafts  
And men who might make slaves.

We made them quench

The fires that were burning in the city  
And then we sacked the city utterly.

When we had sacked her utterly, we forced  
Our Trojan slaves to lever down the ramparts  
Over the walls, until the city seemed  
A mound of fallen stones and roofless houses.  
We lit the wreck.

Then as we sailed for home with slaves and plunder,  
We saw the ruins burning, and the smoke  
Streaming across the sunburnt Trojan plain.  
With all that world of murder on our backs  
We bore our load of misery from Asia.

## EPILOGUE

THOUGH many died and many fled  
To live as beasts do, without bread,  
Or home, or bed.

Yet many, like myself, am slave,  
Weeping the life the spirit gave  
Into the grave.

However long our lives may be,  
There is no hope of getting free  
To such as we.

Swallows will come again, and flowers,  
Not Troy, who guarded with her towers  
That life of ours.

What help in giving way to tears?  
To those most hurt by Fortune's spears  
A spirit nears.

The spirit whom the prisoner knows,  
And broken wretches faint from blows;  
It comes most close.

And though I tread the unknown stair  
Up, into Death, I shall not care,  
It will be there.



*From*  
A LETTER FROM PONTUS  
AND OTHER VERSE



## A LETTER FROM PONTUS

**I**N the first year of the Divine Tiberius,  
I went as junior on a Legate's staff  
To view the Danube frontier and report.  
After a summer on the river there,  
I was despatched to Tomi, on the Euxine,  
To winter, and to learn what could be done  
To keep the savages from pillaging,  
With orders to proceed to Rome in Spring  
By the first ship, when sailing recommenced.

I wintered in that horrible black den  
And learned, beyond all doubt, what should be done  
To bitt the bridle on those savages;  
And had the privilege besides to lodge  
With Ovid, the great poet, exiled there.

He was unlike the Ovid in my mind,  
(All graceful, wanton, charming, credulous,)  
Being an old, bleak, broken-hearted man  
Dressed in wool trowsers and a sheepskin coat,  
Living in dire poverty on biscuit,  
Salt mullet and the country vinegar.  
He had a one-roomed hovel, floored with clay,  
A lamp, a bed of goatskins, a few books,  
A hearth, where seldom any firing burned,  
A few fair relics of his happiness,  
And implements for writing: nothing else.

I did not know his people, nor he mine;  
But being from the City I was welcome  
To him, so long removed from anyone  
Or any thing, that made him happy once.  
He made me share his little through the winter,  
And little though it was I should have fared  
Hardly, without it, in that frontier town,  
Ringed by the barrens blackened by east wind.  
Later, the snow fell, and the frost set in,



A silent, intense cold, night after night,  
With starved birds dead upon the snow next day.  
Mad savages, half starved, on starving ponies,  
Came raiding down and shot their poisoned arrows  
Over our crazy walls at us, and screamed.  
It was more madman's nightmare than a life.  
But always Ovid as a charming host  
Cheered and distracted and delighted me  
Through all those months, not speaking of himself,  
But giving me the wonders of his mind.  
He said he had not talked for seven years.  
And what was trebly precious, he insisted  
On writing my Report; imagine it,  
A subaltern's Report upon the Getæ  
Written by the most famous living poet.  
I was promoted for it the next year.

I never met a mind so full of grain:—  
Other men's grain perhaps, but there it was  
A wealth of knowledge, which came flashing out  
From some old world of beauty and romance  
To make to-day's occasions beautiful.

He had been famous, as men said, since childhood,  
For touching powers of reciting verse.  
Towards the ending of the winter time  
He sometimes spoke for me; pathetic tales,  
Old ballads which had charmed him as a boy,  
Messenger speeches from forgotten plays;  
All spoken with a golden tenderness  
Which broke the hearts of those rough listeners  
(For many begged to listen when he spoke).  
They had been puzzled by him there at first  
And often thwarted and insulted him.  
But he had won them; he was privileged  
To pay no taxes as a citizen,  
(No little mercy in a town so poor),  
And people stared at him as he went by  
And muttered "That's the man Augustus feared. . . ."  
He cuckolded the Cæsar, so they say."

So winter wore away and floods began;  
Then, lo, as they subsided presently,  
One sunset, there was cheering from the tower  
And people cried "The ship from Athens signalled,  
Summer is here: sailing has recommenced."

Next morning, when she entered into port,  
Most of us went to watch her: Ovid stayed.  
He had been disappointed, spring by spring,  
Of pardon, or recall, or messages  
From those he loved; he now expected nothing;  
Nor was there anything for him to-day.  
But letters and delightful things from Rome  
Were there for me, as olives, anchovies,  
And comfort from our vineyard of black grapes,  
With orders from my chiefs beside for me  
To take that ship when she returned for Corinth  
Just one week later, seven days from then.

I counted every hour of those days.  
Could the time pass? Would nothing intervene  
To keep me prisoned in that cursed den?  
Suppose the ship should perish in the harbour,  
Or I fall sick and be refused aboard?  
Yet with this horror of anxiety  
I had some grace of horror for poor Ovid.  
He had been charming to me utterly;  
Now I was going to the City, home  
To Italy, the summer sea and sunshine,  
To friends and lovely women and delight,  
While he would stay alone in Tomi there  
All summer, with a winter at the end  
Like that just passed, and never any hope  
Of mercy or forgiveness or release,  
As someone killed and buried and forgotten.

The night before the morning of the sailing,  
He said to me "You often longed to ask  
Why I was exiled here, but ever feared  
To hurt my feelings. When you sail to-morrow,  
Carry this letter with you, back to Rome,

Bear it at sunset to the Pincian Hill  
And read it there, surveying the world's Queen,  
And think of me in Tomi, on the Euxine.  
It tells my story. Will you do this for me?"

The sun was shining as we walked together  
To where the ship lay at the watering-pier.  
There is a shrub, like almond, with pink blossom,  
Most common in that country in the spring;  
Our way led through a meadow of it then,  
Full flowered, full of honey, loud with bees.  
Below, the ship lay at her watering-place.  
Beyond her, trembled the blue way to freedom.

The poet stopped above the jetty-end:  
"I will not follow to the pier," he said;  
"We'll say farewell: God prosper you, my son,  
May your report delight your generals  
And bring you the promotions you would choose."  
So, there we parted, and I went aboard.  
I saw him as we sailed still standing there,  
Not moving, staring at the something free  
That bore a luckier exile back to Rome.  
He had not stirred when we lost sight of him.  
I think he may have stood there all day long.

Many bright billows, many shadowy mountains,  
And sea be-battered islands spouting spray  
Lie between Pontus and the Pincian Hill.

This is the letter which the poet gave me.  
I read it in the gardens, looking west  
At sunset on the city as he bade.

"Fortune is intermingled with disaster,  
Glory with ruin, triumph with decay,  
My downfall had its roots in my success.

Two roots:—a book of verses about Love,  
Which made me the delight of gallant Rome;  
And Julia, the Cæsar's grand-daughter,  
Fed my disastrous harvest of despair.

She was the princess of that glittering world.  
She flattered me to help her in preparing  
A play, with choral odes, for Roman nobles  
To sing to Cæsar's self upon his birthday.

My play, *Medea*, was the chosen work.  
I wrote the choral odes in a few days.  
All the young nobles who could act or sing  
(Some thirty, no bad harvest from such soil)  
Gathered together in the happy scheme,  
Day after day within the Pauline palace,  
Under myself, the poet of light love,  
And Julia, the goddess of the same.

Julia was bright damnation to the young.  
Greedy, as one consumptive, lovely, reckless,  
Fevered, clutching at youth now swiftly fading,  
Hating her grandfather, the Cæsar's self,  
Hating (and mocking, too,) the Cæsar's wife.  
But she was beautiful unthinkably.  
Her little, clear, adorable bright head  
So neat, so exquisite . . . I told her once  
"Ah, had I been a generation younger  
And bred a sculptor, not a poet, Julia,  
I would have wrought an image of that head  
(That little, neat, impeccable, bright head  
So exquisitely poised upon its neck)  
With so much ecstasy of adoration  
That the hard marble would have turned to flesh  
As happened to the Greek."

I think it pleased her.

She had little, hot, thin hands, and haggard eyes  
Bright as two stars, restless as serpent's tongues,  
She had her mother's wit, her father's courage.  
Her brown hair, banded close about her head,  
Shewed the skull's beauty and kept hidden from us  
Her one defect, her ears. I saw them once.

I have a rule I never yet knew fail.  
Damnably women have ignoble ears.  
Beautiful ears are rarer than good verse.  
Her ears were a malefic mark upon her.  
I saw them; but too late to take the warning.

What happy days in that great rambling palace,  
Filled with the relics and the memories  
Of two most noble families of men,  
Whose images and swords and oak leaf crowns  
Were with us as we sang and acted there.  
The choruses of young men sang my words  
To flutes and strings: my tragic scene was tried:  
We were as merry as the grasshoppers,  
Laughing and singing all day long together,  
Then feasting on the stage, re-telling gaily  
The merry moments of the day just passed.

Yet, as the days passed, it was clear to me  
That those bright haggard eyes were after prey;  
They were intent upon the gallant lad  
Who acted Jason and sang bass in the ode.  
Coming too early to the stage one morning,  
I saw them; beyond doubt they were two lovers.  
I tiptoed back, unheard, no spoil-sport, I,  
I, who had taught the art, could not blame pupils  
Yet the outrageous boldness startled me . . .  
There, in her husband's house, the Emperor's grandchild,  
What madness and what danger, yet what fun.

"This, then," I thought, "explains her sudden zeal,  
For poetry and singing and Augustus,  
All three become her pandars to her love."

Alas; there was another explanation.

There was a feud then among Cæsar's Kin  
Which, of two claimants, should succeed Augustus:—  
Tiberius, the step-son, or the grand-son,  
Agrippa Postumus, his daughter's child.  
The Empress plotted for her son Tiberius;  
But we, who did not love the Cæsaress,

Loved him still less, that secret with slow jaws  
Which mumbled twenty years but bit at last.  
Julia, the reckless, plotted for Agrippa,  
He was her brother and the rightful heir.  
But I, who did not love Tiberius,  
Could not support Agrippa's claim to rule,  
He was a boy, a sullen, vengeful boy  
Not rightly sane, but strong as Heracles.  
Beautiful, yes, but often moody-mad.  
Cæsar, who reckoned him unfit to rule,  
Had sent him to his island, long before.

As Destiny decided, so it fell.

One midnight, when our company dispersed,  
I recollected, as I hurried home,  
That (for the first time since our party formed)  
I had not timed the meeting for next day.  
I thought, "I'll hurry back, and catch them there,  
(They will not all have gone) and name a time."

An instant's instinct said, "I will go home,  
And send them word by messenger, to-morrow."  
Then "No," I muttered, "It is but five minutes . . .  
Five minutes walk by moonlight . . . I'll go back."

I recollect so well the very place  
Where my unhappy Fortune bade me turn.  
A little square from which three alleys led.  
Within the centre, dolphins spouted water  
Into a marble bowl with gleam and splash.  
There was a temple doorway with a lantern;  
Its light gleamed on the helmet of a guard  
Who stood, with grounded spear, watching all passers.

I turned beside the fountain to my death.

The servant at the postern let me in,  
With word that some of my companions lingered.  
Though all the palace household seemed asleep,  
I stumbled down deserted corridors  
Until I saw our meeting-room ahead

Peopled, it seemed, well-lit, the door ajar.  
Then, as I hurried to the lighted space,  
I heard the clear voice of our Julia's lover,  
Saying, "So friends, we are agreed together  
We shall attempt no cutting short of Cæsar  
By one least minute; but when Cæsar dies,  
The Empress and Tiberius shall fall,  
We'll have Agrippa Postumus as Cæsar."  
"We will," the voices cried. Then my foot tripped  
They had a cord across the corridor.  
"Who's there?" one called. There was no drawing back.  
I answered, "Ovid"; then, as I recovered,  
The truth was certain to me as though told . . .  
Cæsar had been unwell some little time . . .  
These, taking all their hopes as facts, expected  
That he would die and now were plotting there  
To make Agrippa Postumus the Cæsar  
In name, while Julia and her lover ruled.  
This was the explanation of her zeal  
For Ovid's poems and Augustus' birthday.

I entered in, to a scared company.

Julia, her lover, and nine singers stood there  
Knowing that I had overheard their treason.  
Eleven pairs of eyes were fixed on me.

There were two singers whom I much disliked,  
One red, the other dun, both faced with masks,  
Two wooden faces, yet with steely eyes.  
I knew that both had thoughts of killing me,  
I saw the same thought passing in their minds:  
"Silence this interloper here and now,  
And leave his body in the lane below;  
The people finding it will say: 'Poor Ovid,  
Murdered by footpads going home last night.'  
I was in danger for a little instant.

"Ah, gentlemen," I cried, "You must not fear me.  
"I'll not betray you; follow your device.  
What I have overheard is safe from me . . .  
We are old friends."

I saw the killers' eyes  
Turn towards Julia for confirmation.  
She, who was watching me, laughed quietly.  
"Of course," she said, "we are old, proven friends."  
"Of course," the younger of the killers echoed,  
"We have no fear."

"No," said the elder killer,  
"That goes without our saying: none at all."  
"Truly," I said, "Here is my hand upon it."

We all shook hands upon my trustiness.  
"My friends," I said, "I am fast growing old,  
And prudence is the penalty of age.  
But might I, as an old friend, counsel prudence?  
A closed door and a sentinel outside?  
Suppose I had not been the poet Ovid,  
No, but a prose-writer, or Cæsar's spy,  
(Such things exist) what ruin to the ode,  
What tragedy within a tragedy.  
At least be prudent till our play is done."

So, with uneasiness and laughter mixed,  
We chatted for a little, then dispersed;  
One, whom I cherished most of all the singers,  
Asked to walk home with me: I granted leave,  
Though qualms were in me as we started forth,  
Lest he should be the comrade picked to kill.  
A doubtful member of the brotherhood.  
Who can be safe among conspirators?  
When we were clear of all the company,  
In the bright moonlight, safe from any spy,  
He said "This folly of conspiracy,  
Mad in design and reckless in procedure,  
Will end in ruin as I ever feared.  
Your coming-in to-night has ended me  
As one of such a crazy company.  
No more such risk for me: to-morrow morning,  
I shall exchange into the Spanish Legion  
And start away at once for further Spain."



He kept his word: we never saw him more.  
His place was taken by another singer.  
Then, three days later, one among us called me  
Aside into a passage in the palace,  
To a still corner up above some stairs;  
(Dark-railed the stairs, the walls were speckled marble.  
I am unlikely to forget the place.)  
He said, "You know the singer we call Shock-head?"  
"Shock-head" was chief of those I called the killers.  
I answered "Yes, of course, what of him, then?"  
"Why, this," he said, "He has not come to sing  
These two rehearsals; he is not at home,  
Nor at his daily pleasures in the city.  
Thinking he might be at his country place,  
I asked his parents; but he is not there.  
Ovid, I know from someone whom I trust,  
That he is in the palace of Augustus.  
He and his comrade both are Cæsar's spies.  
You have not anything to fear, of course,  
But I, O heaven, Ovid, I was mad  
To join this crazy venture; I am going  
Now, at this very instant, where I can."

Then with some broken words he shook my hand  
And slipping down the stairway disappeared.

The next day Julia's lover whispered to me  
"Ovid, it might be prudent to leave Rome."

Thinking the warning good I went from Rome,  
With some misgivings for my friends perhaps,  
Not any for myself: I saw the sea,  
Enjoyed the sun, made verses, tasted wines  
From famous little vineyards: a week passed.

Then suddenly the dearest friend I have  
Came post to find me, bringing dreadful news:—  
"The Lady Julia is in arrest,  
With young Silanus, said to be her lover.  
A dozen others are in jeopardy,  
For plotting for the mad Agrippa boy;  
The rumour is, that you are in it, too.  
For God's sake, brother, say it isn't true."

The lightning of my danger flashed upon me.  
I stood like someone stricken to the death  
Uncertain how to fall; he read my face;  
I saw that he had read it; then he said  
"O hurry back to Rome and shew yourself.  
Your absence in itself causes suspicion,  
My horses are at door: return with me."

Within one hour of my reaching home,  
An officer of the Imperial Guard  
Bade me attend the palace on the morrow.  
I asked, for what; he said he did not know,  
But thought that Cæsar wished to speak to me  
Concerning gallant verses about love.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was wreathed laurel on Augustus' door.  
I was admitted to the waiting-room.  
There were some officers from Germany  
Who brought despatches and some German weapons  
(Heavy, long, thrusting spears) to shew to Cæsar;  
The captain called them to the presence soon  
And I was left alone, counting the streaks  
In the cold marble while my heart misgave  
And officers and clerks passed to and fro.  
I waited while the morning wore away.  
Then from without, an officer, cried "Guard,  
Turn out. Fall in. Attention. Present arms."  
And someone shuffled panting in the passage.  
He shuffled in at length; a ghastly man,  
Legatus once in farther Syria,  
Shaking, and dying, from a fever-fit,  
His starting eyes already glazed with death  
Yet having to report before he died.  
He watched me with the speechless interest  
Which dying men display in living men,  
But did not speak: a long long time we sat there.  
At last with chattering teeth and huddled cloak,  
He moved (half carried) into Cæsar's presence,  
While I remained, recalling scraps of verse,  
Watching the patterns painted on the walls,  
And dreading now what Cæsar had to say.

After a time, a captain of the guard  
Led me into another room and said  
"Wait here a little: I expect the Chief  
Will see you soon. The weapons in the stands  
Were brought from Gaul by Divine Julius  
Whose statue there awaits a verse from you."

I wondered if the Cæsar wanted verses,  
Verses from me about that first of Cæsars,  
That killer of the commonwealth of Rome,  
Murdered upon our murdered liberties,  
Whose brazen ruthless face was posted there.  
Such happy fortune was not to be mine.

Suddenly I was summoned in to Cæsar.  
He sat beneath a window so that light  
Blazed full upon my face and dazzled me;  
I scarcely saw him, but saluted him.  
He was "Divine Augustus," even then.  
Divinity of Fortune and of Place  
Made him inhuman, liker god than man.  
And what of all the godhead did I see  
There in the whiteness of that sunny room?  
I saw a little purple and some gold  
A chair of bronze, a white robe, a white head  
Which swayed the world a thousand miles away,  
Turn where you would; a little cold white voice  
Spoke to me without passion, finally.

"I have been looking at your Book of Love.  
I need not tell the danger of such books  
To all the many thoughtless of the young.  
Nor need I warn you that its teaching runs  
Counter to recent policies and acts  
Not lightly framed and all too necessary.  
It is no little matter to the State  
When genius is linked with the disruptive.

And latterly you have allied yourself  
With scholars of the teachings you profess.  
Adultery and household treachery,  
In this case added to conspiracy.

As an acquaintance of my daughter's child,  
Your life and property, though confiscate,  
Will both be spared; yourself will have one month  
To settle your affairs and say farewell;  
Then, on word given, you will go to Tomi,  
In Pontus, or the Euxine, and there stay.  
Fame says it is the city where Medea  
Killed and cut up her brother."

His hand fell.

A captain of his body-guard was there  
To help my stunned self, blinded from the god,  
Out of the presence to my misery.  
That is the story of the fall of Ovid.

This is the eighth year of my banishment.  
Little remains to tell and none to tell to.  
I wrote *Medea* in the savage tongue  
And taught the savages to play the piece  
With choral odes. I used to hope at first.  
My miseries compelled me to beseech,  
Beg, supplicate, with abject flatteries,  
Whining for mercy. That is over now;  
For I shall perish and be buried here.  
After the summer season comes the winter.  
I had the sunny city in my youth,  
More happiness, more charming friends, more fame,  
Than fell to any poet of the time.

It may be that the miseries of men  
Fulfil some purpose of the deities  
For each man's spirit on its pilgrimage.  
I who have tasted both of life's extremes,  
Who used to pray for never-ending life,  
That so I might survey the field of fable,  
Of men and gods immingled, interchanged,  
In the bright light that only poets see  
And bring into sweet verse the truths perceived,  
Thinking eternity too short a time  
For so much glory, were the power granted,  
Now ask for nothing, save perhaps to help  
What misery I can, with what I have,  
Before an everlasting peace of death."

This is the letter which the poet gave me,  
I read it there upon the Pincian Hill,  
Weeping for that old broken-hearted host  
So soon to die among the savages,  
Far from the lovely women who had loved him.  
Years later, an old lady sent for me,  
One of the greatest ladies then in Rome.  
She asked me much of Ovid as I knew him,  
And wept to hear, and blessed me for my caring.  
She said "I was the one he called Corinna,  
When Life was April and between us two."

### AUSTRALIA

WHEN the North Lander saw the rose in blossom,  
He thought the bush bore fire, and knelt and prayed.  
When first the desert woman saw the sea,  
She cried, "O under God, the day and night."

We have but language for the starry Heaven,  
And words for continents and emperors.  
I have but images within my heart  
And words with which to make those images  
Form in the minds of others, and, alas,  
You are too wonderful and beautiful,  
I cannot tell the marvel of your land,  
But can be happy with my memories.

I think at first of cities bright with flowers,  
Flowers for everybody, everywhere;  
Then of a grass unlike the English turf,  
"Buffalo grass," you called it, tough and springy;  
Then of the birds, the exquisite blue wrens,  
The kookaburras laughing in the fig-tree,  
The whip birds slashing in the rainy glen,  
The blue and scarlet parrots rushing past,  
And black swans on the lake at Woolongoon.  
Yet of the birds the black-backed magpie seems  
The very soul of the Australian scene.  
Often in early morning I would hear him

In strange, sweet song, now like to jingling glasses,  
Now piping, now like flutes, but always telling  
Of morning coming over the world's rim.

Then I remember how upon the hill,  
Among the gumtrees, on the holiday,  
The car sped past a sunny group of children,  
And on the instant as we hurried past,  
I heard a little girl cry, "There's John Masefield,"  
And knew upon the instant what a power  
A language has to give a fellowship  
Over the distances of earth and sea.

Next, I remember how the forest stood;  
Mile after mile of giant gums, blue-gray,  
Glen after glen, blue-gray; peak after peak;  
With blackened rampikes from old forest fires,  
And bones of dead gums, white as skeletons,  
And silence everywhere, not to be broken,  
Save by the water in the gully talking.

Then, the great spaces like the Berkshire downs;  
Mile after mile, with clumps upon the skyline  
Of gumtrees which at distance looked like beech;  
The wind-swept, rolling plain, dotted with sheep;  
The station buildings here and there: few men,  
Perhaps two children upon pony back,  
Turning a mob of cattle, or the slow,  
Part staggering figures of two sundowners,  
Bent underneath the long rolls of their blueys,  
Silently moving to a camping-place.

Next, as it were a river of bright flowers  
In Earth's most lovely garden, and great rain  
Ceasing above a multitude, and sun  
Struggling through cloud, and lighting up the scene  
Of splendid horses going to the post.

Then in the quagmire of the course, the thunder  
Of the great race's passing, with surmise  
From all those thousands, of which rider led;  
Nothing but distant, flitting, coloured caps,  
Shewed in a bunch along the rail; then, lo,

They swerved into the Straight, the great horse leading.  
He bore topweight; the going was a bog;  
He strode at ease, ahead, his ears still cocked.  
Had he been called-upon he could have won  
By half-a-mile, it seemed: his image stays  
Forever in my mind as one of Power  
That achieves easily while Weakness strives.

Next, I remember all the sun-swept, wind-swept  
Hills of the pasture up above the brook;  
No fence in sight; the cattle in small groups  
Moving and grazing in the same direction,  
And all the landscape stretching on and on,  
To unknown mountains, forty miles away,  
Where sheep and dogs and cattle, all gone wild,  
Ran in the range, men said, and dingoes throve.

There was an ancient tree outside the station,  
Which marked (they said) an English convict's grave.  
He swallowed stolen jewels and so died.  
Often I hope that that free space and light  
Have freed him to the lovely universe,  
So that he rides upon the wind there, singing  
For joy that the old iron of his sins  
Is snapped in pieces from his fettered soul.

Always above these memories is the sense  
Of charming people, ever kind and thoughtful;  
Most generous in thought, in word, in deed,  
And faithful in their kindness to the end.  
The mind is glad with many memories  
Of kind things done and uttered by the race,  
Earth's newest race of men, whose bodies' beauty  
Surpasses all the peoples of the world;  
Whose grace and care and generosity  
Though never thanked, can never be forgotten.  
A marvellous kind people, beautiful.

I shut my eyes and hear the magpies utter  
Their magical, sweet cry like jingling glass,  
And see the barren with the whited bones  
Of gumtrees stretching to the flood-water,

Where black swans straddle in a line, like men  
Pretending to be swans. Beyond the flood  
There are the shearing sheds, where men of Anzac,  
The shearers about whom the ballads tell,  
Wonderful men whose fame this country treasures,  
Strip off the fleeces from the sheep as though  
Each fleece were but a woolly coat unbuttoned.

And many many other memories come,  
Of cities fairer than our country holds;  
Of waters gushing among blue-gray gums;  
Or mighty pastures, each with lonely horsemen  
Loping the morning, singing as they go;  
Of beaches where the sun-tanned dare the sharks;  
Or bush, the same for miles, all feathery-dim,  
Each fathom of it green-gray, feathery-dim,  
(Distinct, yet indistinct, almost like seaweed),  
Where thirst has killed her hundreds, and will kill.

But among all these memories I hear  
From gumtrees dead or blossoming, the magpies,  
With that strange song so moving and so sweet,  
The very voice of that far distant land,  
So sweet that all who hear it must be moved  
To hear it once again before they die.

### ✓ THE WILL

By Will, Mars clared in den and heath  
The dagger-claws and sabre-teeth  
And brought their savageries beneath.

By Will, he beat the flint to fire  
And burned the jungle in his ire  
And lit the dark to his desire.

By Will, his spirit tamed the force  
Of the wild bull and the wild horse  
And the wild river in her course.



## THE WILL

By Will, he quarried and made bright  
Stone spires lifting into light  
With visions of the infinite.

By Will, he made him eyes to see  
The Death that Kills in secrecy  
From fly and louse and gnat and flea.

By Will, he made him slaves with hands  
That without word do his commands  
In air, in oceans and in lands.

Earth, water, air and brute and fool,  
And crazy rebel against rule  
By Will, he made each one his tool.

And shall he not, by Will, attack,  
The country's shame, the peoples' lack,  
The rags upon the nation's back?

The blots upon the nation's mind  
The ignorance that makes us blind  
The hate, that shuts us from our Kind?

Surely, by Will, he will blow clear  
His trumpets that all ears shall hear,  
And helping angels shall sweep near,

And the banners of the soul advance,  
Up, out of hate and ignorance,  
Into a new inheritance.

## BALLET Russe

## I

The gnome from moonland plays the Chopin air,  
The ballerina glides out of the wings,  
Like all the Aprils of forgotten Springs.  
Smiling she comes, all smile,  
All grace; forget the cruel world awhile:  
Forget vexation now and sorrow due.  
A blue cap sits coquettish in her hair.

She is all youth, all beauty, all delight,  
All that a boyhood loves and manhood needs.  
What if an Empire perishes, who heeds?  
Smiling she comes, her smile  
Is all that may inspire, or beguile.  
All that our haggard folly thinks untrue.  
Upon the trouble of the moonlit strain  
She moves like living mercy bringing light.

Soon, when the gnomish fingers cease to stray,  
She will be gone, still smiling, to the wings,  
To live among our unforgotten things,  
Centaur and unicorn,  
The queens in Avalon and Roland's horn,  
The mystery, the magic and the dew  
Of a to-morrow and a yesterday.

## II

With delicate control in maddest speed  
This rocket shoots and falls, and falling, twists;  
Where Nature has denied, his soul insists:  
Grace, strength and skill are fused.  
Thus has the starry skill his matter used,  
The harsh, rebellious, formless, lineless stuff  
That would not soon obey, nor blend, nor heed.

This leapt above the horns of bulls in Crete;  
 This hunted Hector round the walls of Troy;  
 This brought the god into his shrine in joy;  
 Thus, long ago, began  
 Whatever beauty has begun in man,  
 The image being beaten from the rough,  
 In hungry instants by the incomplete.

### JOSEPH HODGES, OR THE CORN

HE wore the smock-frock of the country's past,  
 That ancient with frank eye and upright head;  
 His gray hair, beautiful unto the last,  
 Nearly upon his withered shoulders spread.  
 He had a stubbly beard, his furrowed cheeks  
 Were bloodless Age's, threaded with red streaks.

He, who had gathered eighty harvests in  
 As boy or reaper, now himself was white  
 For Death to sickle and to bring to bin.  
 Gone was his body's old companion, Might.  
 • He, who had all day sung, swinging his hook,  
 Now waited to be carted, a cut stook.

His hands, that long had hardened on the hale,  
 Holding the plough behind two horses' backs,  
 And in the sheds of old had swung the flail  
 On many a harvest, now lay white and lax.  
 Himself sat upright ever, gazing forth  
 Over the grass and hopyards to the north.

What harvest did his inner eyes behold  
 From his spent Summer, now that Winter came?  
 The women who had cherished him of old?  
 The friends whom ninety Autumns had made tamer?  
 The ploughteams pondering out, on shaggy hoofs,  
 At dawn, from farms with pigeons on their roofs?

These; and, perhaps, some feeling of the link  
 Of Destiny, that bound him to the Corn,  
 Beauty and bounty of man's meat and drink,

That greens, and browns, and then is waggon-borne,  
And then is food, and strength, and then is Joy,  
Seed-corn of crops that nothing can destroy.

For, as a man declines toward the tomb,  
The symbols of his life, that ruled his way  
Before his spirit quickened in the womb,  
Gather to cheer him through his hut's decay,  
So haply here, as darkness gathered dim,  
Immortal cornland shone, and nourished him.

Till, as he gazed into the past, the sound,  
The scene and colour of his life's delight,  
The crop in April, green upon the ground,  
The crop in rank, in bristle, sickle-white,  
The crop in barn, in bread, all merged and made  
A Word that led him deathwards unafraid.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is raw clay tangled with roots of flowers.  
This earth that grows the grass and little flowers.  
You cut it with the share or with the spade;  
It is like meat, it shines; the stones stick in it.  
The seed is flung on it and tumbled over,  
While the rooks' beaks, like iron, probe for it,

And gulls' bills too; and bitter winter binds.  
Then, in the dark meat of the world, the seed  
Heats in its nook, and sings, and thrusts out roots  
To suck and clutch, to break in three and suck.

Then, feeling where the sun shines, it arises  
And bursts out of the clod into the Spring,  
The sun, the sky, the blowing cloud and wind,  
Rain falling mixed with snowflakes; blackthorn blowing.

First, fear of birds' beaks and of hunters' hooves,  
Then the green blade will cover up the hare  
As she lies, furrow to the kestrel's eye.

Then, as the cuckoo comes and May rain follows  
With hawthorn, crimson speckled, drowsy smelling,  
It stands and buds and ears, till it is army  
Massed within hedges, dense as a King's crowd.

The vixen with her cubs lie in the runway  
Watching the shrew-mice race into the dark,  
Or beetles rambling, or the harvest-mice  
Weaving their ball of joy above bright stems.

Two sparks among the rust of a red fur,  
One with the clay, the vixen: rabbits come  
Nibble the nicked tongues of the milky weed,  
And scratch, or cock an ear, or rise to listen  
With drooped forepaws, and round eyes very bright.  
High overhead the sparrow-hawk is watching.  
His murder drops, the footpad weasel leaps,  
The white trap of the vixen snatches suddenly.  
There is a squealing, bleating into silence.  
A blackbird chackers: all begins again,  
Under high summer blazing in the sun  
In a great drone of flies, now up, now down.

Sometimes a little boy, escaped from school,  
Creeps up the ditch and thence into the forest  
Of countless yellowing stems; he sits there, hidden  
Marvelling at the dusk close to the ground  
Smiling to hear his fellows call his name  
Not knowing where he is; but not replying  
Till they, weary of calling, having tasted  
The honey in the honeysuckle trumpets  
Among the hedge close-by, go shouting on,  
While he sits still, within the amber gloom  
Seeing far off the head and crimson eye  
Of a cock pheasant, lifted, watching him,  
And near at hand the delicate strong strings  
(Decked with striped flowers) that twist about the stalks;  
Rough poppy stems with scarlet banners drooped;  
Blue cornflower and yellow ragwort flowers  
And thistle tufting into down for finches.

At dusk, with silent glide of curving wings,  
The covey settle and run swift, swift, swift,  
Into their quiet, where the mottled shells  
Lie broken, whence they came. Now the moon rises,  
The owls come out; the moths with their long tongues  
Quiver above the honey-suckle trumpets.

The humble bees beside their honey-pouches  
 Dream of the clover-field in the hot light,  
 Ten acres of pink clusters of sweet suck.  
 A white mist dims on the cool grass and thickens  
 Above the pond, along the water-reach.  
 Night deepens and is still, save for some cow  
 Moving in pasture, or the squeak of bats,  
 Or bells from the two churches within hearing,  
 Or sheep in fold above, cropping the chicory.

But when the dew is gone, on the hot morrow  
 Farmer and men and teams come with the reapers;  
 And all day long the horses drag the reapers  
 Swathe within swathe along the lessening square.  
 The army falls in rank, the flowers wither,  
 And men and women stook the banded bundles,  
 And then with sticks and guns murder the rabbits  
 That have crept inwards to the last patch cut.  
 The dusk falls on a field of tented stooks  
 Where wild things tremble at the covert gone,  
 And partridges call each to each till darkness.

Now, the brown horses drag the waggons in  
 For loading of the stooks, till all is carted.  
 All the rough, bristling, four square plaited ears  
 All fat and firm with food, are flung aloft;  
 Then the last bundle of the last stook taken  
 Falls to the woman, for her plait, then all,  
 Men, women, children, mount on the last waggon,  
 Waving their wisps of gleanings, and all sing  
 In the hot afternoon, for harvest home.  
 The wheels crush the close stubble, the song lifts,  
 In joy of earth that makes man's marrow fat  
 And cords his muscles; joy of the sun that pours  
 Energy forth on life, joy of the corn,  
 By which their twined strength enters into man.  
 So with their song they come into the barn;  
 There the brown mice flit to the golden shelter  
 And pigeons pick the spilled grain, the red cock  
 Clucks for his wives; they peck about the floor.  
 But the skilled woman plaits from the last stook  
 Twin crowns of straw, for Gospel and Epistle,  
 To hang in Church upon Thanksgiving day.

Soon, when the apples redden or glow gold,  
 And hawthorn berries brighten in the hedge,  
 And partridges are killed and swallows gather,  
 The threshers will be there, and all day long  
 The drone will lift and die about the farm  
 Among the wash and trample of flung straw,  
 The dust of straw, the heaving forks of men,  
 Chaff underfoot and bodies of dead mice,  
 While the sacked grain is readied for the mill.

\*           \*           \*           \*           \*

All-living Sun, all-giving Earth, the two  
 Father and Mother of the stock of men,  
 Kindler and giver of the miracle  
 By which we stand, the Corn, we give Thee thanks.

By Corn we eat the radiance of high heaven  
 And inmost blood and marrow of the earth;  
 All that the easter chills and wester fosters;  
 All that the will of life within the seed  
 Can suck of plumpness from the clay; of greenness  
 Out of the air, the rain, or resolved atom;  
 Of ripeness from the turning of the wheel.

This that was plant of pride is now man's strength,  
 Steering a ploughshare steady between horses;  
 Leading the bull to drink; sickling laid corn;  
 Mowing the knee-deep meadow of moon-daisies,  
 In the June blaze among the biting flies,  
 When cuckoos try for their forgotten tune;  
 Holding the stallion in his hour of ramp;  
 Sinking the piers of bridges, laying causeways  
 Athwart the run of floods, damming back tides,  
 Winning a cornland from the sea itself;  
 Daring the sea on fallen logs, fire-hollowed,  
 Then, daring further, felling pine and oak  
 Bending the stubborn timber, sawing plank,  
 Pitching the seams and launching forth with oars,  
 Or canvas hoisted, to the unknown fate  
 Beyond the skyline, out of sight of land.

And from this mettle of man, the sweetness comes:  
The women with the majesty of queens,  
With knowledge, mercy, wisdom; their calm eyes  
Perceiving truth, their courage sheltering truth,  
Their selflessness like light about men's lives,  
Their tenderness like light to little children,  
Who sport about them, singing, merry as May.

All strength and gladness, shadows of Earth and Sun,  
Are shadows of the might and glory of God,  
To Whom all men who grow out of the Earth  
Lift in their exultation, as the Corn lifts.

Out of this Corn, that is such joy, men build  
Their churches, where they act day after day  
With singing, music, dancing, lights and colour,  
The death and resurrection of glad man,  
Till the eared corn of man becomes a flame  
No longer Earth, but burning from the Sun,  
No longer multitudinous but one,  
No longer bread of sacrifice but Joy.

### THE WILD GEESE

All the Many is One,  
In each Father is Son,  
On one string the beads run.

In each Sister is Brother,  
In each Daughter is Mother,  
All Each is Other.

Since I am You, You, Me,  
Why scarlet Earth and Sea  
With noun of Be?

Salt Severn shines in strip,  
The Wild Geese poise at lip,  
One web at hip.



## THE WILD GESE

Bright eyes open on brain,  
There are things in the rain,  
It's danger again.

A clanking, a roar, a rise,  
Multitude, with hounds' cries,  
Flag, flog, in skies.

Away, away, in huddles,  
Shadows shoot in the puddles,  
The grey cloud cruddles.

Fly, pennon, and clank, pen,  
Your bread is the salt fen,  
Your laughter, at Men.

On bread of trash of the seas,  
In laughter of soul go these,  
But they are only Wild Geese.

*I saw, in Delville Wood,  
A cat lap a man's blood,  
A cat eat a man's brain.  
Men want to see't again.*

All Winter through they ravenge  
The salprey's glitter, for scavage,  
Any findings are havings.

All i'the mud, i'the dark,  
With one wit warm, they hark  
The tide run, the fox bark.

Candlemas-fox stops tune,  
Wild geese go by the moon,  
Sickle-edge is too soon.

Snowdrop-moon, grown, reminds  
Of highways over the winds  
To snows one finds.

They listen, they quest with bill,  
As moon grows, the bloods thrill,  
Then, away with a will.

Up, up, round, and away,  
A hurricane of grey,  
Droppt breast-feathers as spray.

Past sea-blink and sea-coast,  
This arrow hurls, this host,  
Of will-flung ghost.

Till, there, ice, ice, forlorn,  
Where no grass grows, nor corn,  
Nor men dead nor man born.

Down, where the shark-mouth steals,  
By black ice-holes, for seals,  
The flight hurls, the flock wheels.

They light by green ice-pools,  
None, of them all, such fools,  
As to be ruled; none rules.

A long long crying and gabble,  
Running forward in rabble,  
Broad bills nibble and scrabbie.

The Northern Lights behold  
Their nesting in the cold,  
Their goslings gold.

\* \* \*

Dusk falls when the Sun turns,  
Frost strangles with white ferns,  
A redness burns.

The Sun is dead in the South,  
A hunger calls and a drouth  
For sea-mud salt i'the mouth.

## THE WILD GEESSE

Then away, hurling, afar,  
No Sun, no Moon, no Star,  
Yet marshes are.

They have no masses, no classes,  
No wars, no poison-gasses,  
They are geese, they are asses.

O, it must be absurd  
To be a goose of a bird  
And salute no general spurred.

Civilisation rots  
When men aren't killed with shots.  
Souls grow rustic and mothic  
Unless kept cut-throat and gothic;  
It is the fact, all know it,  
Except these geese and that poet.

If we could put goose-brain  
In airship or aeroplane,  
We could drop bombs like rain.

Make such holes in the mud,  
Fill them full with such blood,  
Give God thanks for Security,  
Practice Racial Purity,  
And be (if God should please),  
Almost as wise as geese.

## HOPE

O HOPE that glimmers in the breast  
Come within Life, be manifest.  
Make better best.

Change us, that we no longer lie  
Living in ignorance, nor die  
In poverty.

Take, first, the thought (of Hell's contrival)  
Of Man, Man's Enemy and Rival,  
Back to the devil.

And bring again from Heaven the thought  
Of Man, Man's Brother, whom Christ bought  
In His fight fought.

BEAUTY

O QUEEN of Beauty, you who once were fire  
In hearts, in every city, till they wrought  
The image of you out of passionate thought,  
Their only peace the ecstasy you brought,  
Their only life the dying from desire,

If men have changed, immortal you are still  
The snowdrop in the February grass,  
The stormcock crying that the snow will pass,  
The Hope, to breaking souls that say "Alas,"  
Crying, "Come, courage, luck will change, it will."

You are still that, O Beauty, you are ours  
As Hope, as some wild knocker at the door,  
Entering, dropping snow upon the floor,  
With word of Kingdoms never known before;  
And strong hearts kindle, and the watch-dog cowers.

## NETS

COLONIES built a fort for safety's sake,  
With red-brick barracks, near the marshy lake.

When it was finished GOVERNMENT proclaimed,  
*"Lakes within mile of barracks must be drained."*

BARRACKS objected on financial grounds,  
*"Draining the lake will cost five thousand pounds."*

GOVERNMENT answered: *"In re Drainage . . . stet.  
Fix doors and windows with mosquito net."*

*"Order the needed net on Indent Three . . .*  
MEDICAL TROPICAL . . . DEPARTMENT D."

BARRACKS took Indent Three and read the rules  
Printed atop by imbeciles for fools.

BARRACKS took measures: after many days  
Completed indents went upon their ways.

The sailors bore them safely over sea,  
The postman brought them to DEPARTMENT D.

DEPARTMENT D replied: *"Re nets required . . .  
Reply per memo.—meshes stringed or wired?"*

BARRACKS replied: *"Your favour, seventh, rec't  
In view of white ant, wire meshes best."*

DEPARTMENT D retorted in reply:  
*"For wire mesh indent DEPARTMENT I."*

BARRACKS replied: *"To save time, kindly send  
Indents you bold DEPARTMENT I, your end."*

DEPARTMENT D replied: *"See Orders A.  
Indent the proper Dep't in proper way."*

BARRACKS replied: *"To save re-measurement,  
Kindly return the No. 3 Indents sent."*

DEPARTMENT D replied: *"The Indents are  
Filed, as per Regs., see Six, Jacobus R."*

BARRACKS again made indents: in the task  
Reams of spoiled papers filled the paper-bask'.

The sailors bore the indents, clean and dry;  
The postman gave them to DEPARTMENT I.

DEPARTMENT I immediate answer made:  
*"Report why Requisition thus delayed*

*"Surprised and shocked that Orders urgent plain  
Ignored and flouted. What excuse? Explain."*

DEPARTMENT I made ring a hundred bells,  
A hundred subs passed on a thousand hells,

A thousand willing workers wrought as one,  
Windows and doors, the netted frames were done.

The sailors bore them safely in their carracks,  
The lorry men delivered them to BARRACKS.

BARRACKS announced: *"Re Nets. Acknowledge same.  
Parade with small arms for Mosquito Frame."*

Battalions mustered: sergeants' voices hoarse  
Shouted *"Form Fours. Squad, as you were. Form Fours."*

The netted frames were issued: every file  
Formed Fours, saluted, Right-wheeled to the pile,

Took each a frame, Formed Fours, saluted, Formed  
Fours and Right Dressed, as when a city's stormed.

Soon from the ranks the question passed along:  
*"How do we fasten frames where they belong?"*

Captains considered, majors looked perplexed,  
Colonels, not knowing, could, by rank, be vexed.

The LINE, not knowing, asked the HORSE; the sons  
Of Pegasus, the HORSE said: "*Ask the Guns.*"

The GUNS replied: "*We know not. It appears  
An Ironmonger's job: Ask ENGINEERS.*"

The ENGINEERS replied: "*By Barrack Square,  
We do not do mechanics: Ask the AIR.*"

The AIR replied: "*The methods most in use  
Are: Nails (the cheapest); Hooks and Eyes; or Screws.*"

"*Right,*" said COMMAND: "*Parade. The Order is:  
Pile all Mosquito Frames. Form Fours. Dismiss.*"

"*And for the Frames, we'll do as AIR advise,  
Indent the proper Dep't for Hooks and Eyes.*"

The Frames were piled: the BARRACKS searched the  
Books

Of Rules prescribing Forms for ordering Hooks.

One said: "*For Hooks, 3, William IV, applies:  
Or seems to do, but not for Hooks and Eyes.*"

Another said: "*But by Department Rules  
Hooks count as Doctor's Comforts, Eyes as Tools.*"

Another said: "*Appeal Court makes it good  
That Eyes are Ordnance Stores and Hooks are Food.*"

Another said: "*War Regulations say  
Both are Munitions, needing Buff Form A.*"

Another said: "*Defence Acts: Section P . . .  
Says they're both Rations, needing Blue Form G.*"

Another said: "*Why go to all the fuss?  
Malarial Fever never troubles us.*"

*"Malarial Fever never has been known  
Within the Circuit: leave the thing alone."*

*"Why nets?" another cried, "As I'm a sinner . . .  
Why rob the poor mosquito of his dinner?"*

*"That cannot stop a poison in the air  
Invisible, and blowing everywhere."*

Another said: *"Ours not to reason why:  
Let's get our own back on DEPARTMENT I."*

The Message went: *"Mosquito Nets to hand.  
No Hooks nor Eyes. We cannot understand."*

*"Is this incompetence, or is it worse,  
Wilful betrayal of the public purse?"*

*"COMMAND and COLONIES await with pain  
Eyes, Hooks, Apologies: Express. Explain."*

DEPARTMENT I replied: *"Rule Ninety-six  
Says MEDICAL gives Nets, but BARRACKS fix."*

*"Fix as you please, your cost, nor bother thus  
With senile prate. Hooks no concern of us."*

BARRACKS appealed to COLONIES: *"Reply  
Following cable from DEPARTMENT I."*

*"Urge you request Department to provide  
Fixings omitted with the Nets supplied."*

*"Nettings as furnished useless until placed,  
And Fever season near: no time to waste."*

COLONIES cabled, the DEPARTMENT wrote  
To STATE DEPARTMENT, LAW: *"Attention. Note."*

*"MEDICAL TROPICAL are asked for Eyes  
And Hooks with Nettings. We refuse. Advise."*



LAW (STATE DEPARTMENTS), said: "*Act Seven, Four, Edward the Second, is applied no more;*

"*But might be pleaded: Statute, Mary, Nine, Restraining Soldier's a stronger line;*

"*And in WEST INDIA ISLANDS versus GUNS A precedent was 'stablished, which still runs:*

"*Thus, that although the State may greatly grant All things, in theory, sometimes it can't.*

"*And when it can't, as in the present case, Then it devolves on officers in place*

"*To improvise and implement until The State they serve is saved from threatened ill.*

"*This seems the likeliest line. Advise you cable BARRACKS affix the Nets themselves if able.*

"*The trifling cost must be subscribed from Pay.*"

BARRACKS received this in the Flanders way.

They cabled LAW DEPARTMENT, ARMY BRANCH: "*MEDICAL TROPICAL makes boldest blanch.*

"*They urge us pay, or plainly so intend, For Hooks they should have sent and didn't send.*

"*Urge that such quibbling be at once opposed.*"  
LAW (ARMY BRANCH) drew battle-axe and closed.

LAW (STATE DEPARTMENTS) bowed from bitter  
thwacks  
Dealt by LAW'S (ARMY BRANCH'S) battle-axe.

LAW'S (ARMY BRANCH'S) battle phalanx cried:  
"*Hooks are your Province, instantly provide,*

"*Or grant the thirty pounds that BARRACKS may.*"  
LAW (STATE DEPARTMENTS) quavered in dismay.

MEDICAL TROPICAL, DEPARTMENT I,  
Quavered as well, but rallied to reply.

They pressed LAW (STATE DEPARTMENTS) to say  
thus:

*"The cost of Hooking cannot fall on us.*

*"Statutes and Regulations make it plain.  
We shall not answer such request again."*

LAW (ARMY BRANCH) applied another force;  
Their BRANCH'S MEMBER rose in fitting course

And said that Honourable Members heard  
Of shocking things (or shocking things averred)

Against the TROPIC BRANCH OF PUBLIC HEALTH.  
That sickening corruptions crept by stealth

To Offices, was known: Democracy,  
The Greek Sage said, must have a watchful Eye.

That, for his own part, he would never credit  
A thing so grim, yet everybody said it.

He therefore hoped that Government would sift  
The matter out. Enquiry should be swift.

He heard that State Officials, penny wise,  
Boggled at heroes having Hooks and Eyes.

Our brave defenders under Tropic Suns  
Marched Hook and Eyeless on the foemen's guns.

If it were so (he could not well believe it),  
Let Justice draw her Sword and Guilt receive it.

He sat, amid applause, and as it died,  
LAW'S (STATE DEPARTMENTS') Member, rose and  
sighed,

And twitched his waistcoat down and sniffed, and said,  
That never yet since Parliament was made

Had charge more stealthy with more brazen brow  
Been urged more basely, with less wit, than now.

The facts were plain: observing recent laws,  
TROPICAL HEALTH despatched Mosquito Gauze

To BARRACKS underneath the Tropic Sun.  
ALL BARRACKS fixed the Nets excepting one.

One erring BARRACKS only stood aside,  
Ignoring Nets, in military pride.

This BARRACKS being taunted for neglect,  
Still sought excuse for failing to erect

These necessary barriers against Death.  
He had not eloquence, nor had he breath,

To character in fitting terms their error.  
He mentioned it with shrinking, nay, with terror . . .

Would Members credit him? These sons of Mars,  
Rich with the spoils of many frontier wars,

Refused to pay the paltry sixpence each  
To fix the Nettings. Without further speech

He asked the House to let their Censure fall  
Full on the erring BARRACKS, if at all.

Then, upon one side or another, rose  
Members, to urge with thunder, or oppose . . .

This way and that they gave sufficient grounds  
That BARRACKS pay, or not pay, thirty pounds.

GOVERNMENT lastly rose and said, in fact,  
That something somewhere contravened the Act;

That faults were better probed, not by Division,  
But grave enquiry by a staid Commission.

That such Commission should be promptly named  
To settle who should pay and which be blamed.

Straightway the Members of Commission sat  
And heard how that was this and this was that;

And heard the Leaders of DEPARTMENT I  
Refuse to pay, since they would rather die.

While BARRACKS cabled first, that Metal Hooks  
Were Comforts for the Sick in all the Books:

That Metal Eyes, by all the Regulations,  
Were stores for Casualty Clearing Stations:

And that as Stores or Comforts they would all  
Die, ere they paid, so let the Heavens fall.

Meanwhile the Netted Frames in quiet heaps  
Sheltered the barrack kittens' mid-day sleeps.

And Time went by, who grieves not nor exults  
But passes and in passing brings results.

Mosquitos came and bit; the fever crept  
Into the veins of soldiers as they slept,

And fever rose till every soldier's bed  
Held one who bore the most throbbing head.

And some men danced upon and about all platoon,  
As weak as pith and pallid as the moon,

Were invalided-out, and shipped away  
To England, never more to hear the bray

Of bugle, sergeant, knight or colonel.  
The fever burned the Barracks to a shell:

All were as ghosts, who lived, and in their veins  
Still, to this day, the living death remains.

The general, shuddering with fever-quake,  
Wrote out the Order: "*We must drain the Lake.*"

When it was drained, the COLONIES reported  
To GOVERNMENT: "*Let BARRACKS be transported*

*"Across the Island to another site."*

GOVERNMENT wrote: "*Suggestion good. Invite*

*"Tenders forthwith. Shift BARRACKS across Isle."*

The Government Commission sat meanwhile  
Hearing the Experts on Mosquito Net  
And Hooks and Eyes.

I'm told they're sitting yet.

### THE LONG DRIVE (Edinburgh to Boar's Hill)

In a garage not far from the Rock of the Castle  
I saw the car ready and filled all her tanks.  
As the clocks chimed for eight I turned into the bustle,  
And the air flitted swift past the little car's flanks.

We were soon past the lights of the city's mean alleys  
And standing away as the darkness closed in,  
The hills glowed and faded, the lamps starred the valleys,  
We heard the last lark, and the <sup>first</sup> owl begin.  
KS, if at

With glaring on glaring of moon and homing,  
The road lighted up till the glare was past;  
The still-breathing midnight stole into the gloaming,  
The motors grew fewer and ended at last.

At times in the townships from windows bright lighted,  
Came music, or singing, but these soon were few;  
Now a bicyclist passed, now a walker benighted,  
Now a policeman on beat going caped from the dew.

Then lamplight grew scarcer, each village we entered  
Was a blind row of homes at each side of the street,  
With a crouched, green-eyed cat going stealthy self-centred  
On the shrieking of mice under rose-briar feet.

Then we entered a darkness where no-one was stirring,  
The moths moved and drooped in the beam of our light,  
Now a leaf struck the hood, or a beetle went whirring,  
Or a dazed rabbit leaped and was lost in the night.

Then the way became one with the night, lost and lonely;  
Through moorland and woodland and downland we  
hurled;  
We were swift-running light on a reach of road only,  
And to swerve right or left, that alone was the world.

Then lamplight shewed steady, our hurry was slackened,  
We drove the still street of a fast-asleep town,  
Not a dog barked to greet us, the world ahead blackened.  
And again we beat on through the wind on the down.

Unknown and unseen were the moorlands beside us,  
The railway to England lay close to the road,  
White signal posts stood, having round lamps that eyed us,  
The telegraph wires were arrows that glowed.

Then with roaring and rush, and a spilling glare shaking,  
On the railway beside us the Scotsman went by;  
The moon stepped in stillness, her white fleece forsaking,  
A planet burned bright in the south-western sky.

They burned, moon and planet, in heaven before us,  
An unchanging change sped away as I scanned.  
My engine beat time and the gear whined in chorus,  
The wheel's pressure shifted to right or left hand.

Then lo, as we hurried, an inn by the wayside,  
Red petrol-pumps ranged and a dusty parked car,  
Two travellers halting for beds till the day-tide,  
And a man bearing bags to the lighted inn-bar.

And halting, myself, till the porter could tend me,  
 I filled up my tanks, but resolved not to stay;  
 Since the wind and the planet and moon would befriend  
 me

I dreaded no moor-mist nor missing the way.

So to Beattock (for Moffat) I held, past the gleaming  
 Bright stars in the bog-pools, scared peewits that rose,  
 Bright waters in spate from the hill torrents streaming,  
 And the startled strange crying of sheep on the knowes.

Past Beattock's dark moorland of curlew and plover,  
 Past Moffat, and on, through the wind striking cold,  
 Past the granite-strown moors where Carlyle was a lover,  
 Where his blithe wife and he rode together of old.

There he pondered the doings of men, and gave sentence,  
 And felt the winged spirit dragged back by the chain,  
 Rejoiced in his might and stood sick in repentance,  
 Bareheaded alone on the moors in the rain.

Beyond Ecclefechan, the lowlands drew nearer,  
 The hills shrank to levels, a water gleamed wan,  
 The wheel moved and backed to the will of the steerer,  
 The ever-lapped roadway for ever led on.

Till lo, there, before us, were black bulks of grimness,  
 The bridge and the castle and town of Carlisle.  
 We drove through her silence, then paused in the dimness  
 To eat, and drink coffee, and rest <sup>lamps-hile.</sup>

And then, since I came to those <sup>and owl</sup> <sup>if at</sup> as a stranger,  
 I bent to the sidelights to study the map,  
 And thought of the warnings of friends of the danger  
 Of loose shifting surface at bends upon Shap.

I thought of the Romans who marched up to battle  
 Along the same road, and of Scots who had come  
 Twixt midnight and dawn for the reiving of cattle,  
 Or for Stuart and crown with the bagpipe and drum.

They had come, they had gone, with their fervour and  
order,  
Their hope and their song and the sergeant's swift curse,  
To the end God ordained them; that place was the Border,  
Men crossed it like marriage, for better or worse.

Then away once again by the ways given over  
To darkness and silence and things of the night,  
Where the glaring green eyes showed the fox was a rover,  
And the hedgehogs' long legs ran like stilts from the light.

And the eyes of the hedgehogs were red to our seeming,  
And the cats' eyes gleamed green, near the lightless still  
homes.

We drove by a wood where the rabbits were teeming,  
The hedgehogs among them went hunchbacked like  
gnomes.

Then we drew to the lakes and the beauty of waters,  
And mountains and forest and moonlit still bays;  
Night brooded above with the planets her daughters,  
Their light on the waters made magical ways.

I thought that those waters had mirrored the faces  
Of a brother and sister, most dear to us still,  
He, stern as the crags and as deep as their bases,  
She, calm with a love that no evil can kill.

They lived with those mountains and lakes till the brother  
Was one with their spirit and spoke with their voice,  
And April herself laid her hand on the other  
And gave her her power to bless and rejoice.

The water that mirrored their faces, the grasses  
They trod on, have gone, as their bodies have gone,  
But power vouchsafed to a soul never passes,  
And beauty once given forever lives on.

Beside, as we sped, was a cataract lashing,  
Then darkness and silence of mountains and trees,  
Then lakes black with shadow, with mirrored stars flashing,  
And fir-forest voiced like the breaking of seas.



Then I thought that beside me a swift foot had trodden,  
And a clear voice had echoed from each of those rocks,  
John Peel in the dew in his homespun gray hodden  
Had come with his hounds there and wakened the fox.

For Troutbeck was near us, where once, in the morning,  
The horn of John Peel had aroused men to mirth;  
With thought of that hunter we passed Troutbeck horning,  
Though he and his meyny were long gone to earth.

Then on, growing weary as night became older,  
The wheel swayed and altered: we speeded or slowed  
The road swerved and reswerved to this or that shoulder,  
Our goal was the light on the bend in the road.

The darkness was chill as the sky paled for morning,  
Then colour came shyly, the trees became green,  
A blackbird flew out from the hedge with a warning,  
I switched off the lights for the road could be seen.

Lamps burned in the bedrooms, the world was awaking,  
Near Lancaster city we passed the first man.  
Ere we left him behind us the morning was breaking,  
And soon all about us the day's work began.

Then we came into Preston and halted an hour,  
And bathed and had breakfast and shifted a rim,  
Then cleaned up her spark-plugs and filled her with power,  
And headed her south through the dark towns and grim.

Till to right there were towers, soot-blackened, smoke-  
spouting,  
Below them the masting of steamers at piers,  
Steam plucking the tackles of derricks, men shouting,  
And fat, spinning slings lapsing landward with cheers.

We passed them; beyond them a bridge gave us entry  
To country unsmircht by steel, cotton or coal,  
A grim-looking garage beside it stood sentry,  
We filled all our tanks and went on for our goal.

The hot summer morning grew brighter before us,  
Green farms lay beside us, clear blue was the sky,  
With swift steady beating the engine kept chorus,  
And village by village the landmarks dropped by.

All crowded the road was, and narrow, and winding,  
Ten bends to a furlong and most of them blind,  
The sun dead ahead in his southing was blinding,  
But landmark by landmark the towns dropped behind.

Till presently, blue in the distance, the presence,  
"The old Shropshire mountain," the Wrekin, raised head,  
The god with his wolf, waiting grim in his pleasance  
With churchyards all round him where Masefields lie dead.

We halted near Newport: the drive had gone slowly  
From press on the road, and the way little known,  
Now here nothing passed, but a grocer's van solely  
That ran by for Shifnal and left us alone.

Most sweet was the hot summer drowse as we rested,  
But Shifnal to Oxford meant many miles still.  
I went through her spark-plugs and cleaned them and  
    tested,  
And climbed back aboard and went on with a will.

Two miles beyond Shifnal, the road gangs were tarring,  
The width of the roadway was wet with hot tar,  
A driver sped by us and sent it all starring  
In black flicks and splashes all over the car.

Mist clung here and there as the summer day ended,  
We drew near to Severn, but now on the road  
With barking of sheep dogs the milking-cows wended  
From meadow to byre and often we slowed.

By the red sandstone rocks under Bridgnorth the olden,  
By Bowman, we went, through the fast dying day,  
As we neared Kidderminster the sunset was golden,  
When the car ceased to run there, the twilight was gray.

After halting and working, the engine re-started,  
We drove across Bromsgrove, through Redditch and on.  
The day (and the joy of the drive) had departed,  
And all save the effort to end it was gone.

At Alcester, we passed gipsy caravans going  
To camp by some copse on their way to a fair,  
A glimpse of lit windows and foreign eyes showing,  
And ponies with ears back and yellow teeth bare.

At Stratford we halted to dine at the Arden,  
The full night had deepened with stars in the sky.  
The oars of the boatmen who rowed past the garden  
Made ruffles of glitter go loitering by.

Then on, for the last lap, though aching and dizzy,  
The last fifty miles, through the moonless dark hours;  
A crowd seemed about me, all talking and busy,  
And the road seemed a tunnel deep-burrowed through  
flowers.

And at times all the flowers arched up, tall and splendid,  
Like a Gothic church roof in a vault overhead,  
And I longed as I drove for the drive to be ended,  
And the swift beating engine at peace in its shed.

Long Compton was passed, and the bend in the hollow,  
Near Enstone, and still all the way seemed alive  
With people loud-talking, all running to follow,  
Till the car had more voices than bees in a hive.

Then we drooped towards Woodstock and slowed to go  
through it,  
Past the old English house—where the Black Prince was  
born,  
I thought of the maxim—seek peace and ensue it;  
I longed for my peace as a starved horse for corn.

But mixed with the longing was rapture of knowing  
The four hundred miles that the wheels had whirled by,  
The things swiftly seen in the scene swiftly flowing,  
The fields and the homes where men struggle and die.

The glimpses of houses, of waters, of people,  
The child by the roadside, the stallions' slow lurch,  
The moment of chimes from the bells in a steeple,  
The instant of joy from some marvellous church.

All these were as things that a man's soul remembers  
Perhaps, after death, when his body lies numb,  
That kindle perhaps into flame from the embers,  
And lighten his soul in the next life to come.

They flashed in my spirit, they sang with their voices,  
Their triumph attuned to the hurrying wheels,  
That over all sorrow a power rejoices,  
That under all laughter a sympathy feels.

Ahead, blinking lights showed the motor-cars coming,  
They gleamed round the corner and glared in my face;  
So suns see their planets through wide heaven homing,  
So stars see the comets in infinite space.

Yet another few miles, every reach, every bending,  
Each hollow and hole known and dropped in our flight,  
Up the steep pitch of bridge, down the swerved slope  
    descending,  
Then over the rails, to the first Oxford light.

Then slow, through the long shiny way growing brighter  
The trees of St. Giles's, the lines of parked cars;  
The turn for the Broad and the turn for the Mitre,  
And Folly Bridge river reflecting the stars.

Then after the hill, by the wood, round the turning,  
At last the white gate and the thuya's swished frond;  
I sounded the klaxon for joy of returning,  
And drew back the brake in the green shed beyond.

Then after the long lurching leap all was stable,  
And after the glare of the lamps all was black,  
And silence ticked in from the engine's long babel,  
The moon above Bledlow moved white out of wrack.

Then silently out of the pine-branches o'er us  
An owl floated wraith-like, like thought going by,  
The mice rustled leaves in the fern-patch before us,  
The owl clawed an oak-bough and fluted his cry.

### THE FLOWING OF THE SANGARIOS

I SAW a sullen little river swerve  
Across the angry barren as we sped.  
The land was skinned down to the naked nerve,  
The war had blasted all the dwellers dead.  
No building near but had its roofing spilled  
Bare to the iron heaven overhead.  
Gray-brown the world was without touch of spring;  
The trees, the flowers and the grass were killed.

To me that landscape was a wondrous thing.

For once, in youth, King Priam, clad in bronze,  
Marched by that river with the lads of Troy,  
Northward, to battle with the Amazons;  
And having conquered them retrod his track,  
Bearing his prize; there Hecuba and he  
Courtied and wedded and begat their boy;  
Zeus in his mercy letting neither see  
The things he stewarded and meant to be:—  
Helen, the busy beaches, the attack;  
Skamander's water lilies red with blood;  
Achilles dragging Hector in the mud;  
The murder in the midnight and the sack.

### WOOD-PIGEONS

OFTEN the woodman scares them as he comes  
Swinging his axe to split the fallen birch:  
The keeper with his nim-nosed dog at search  
Flushes them unaware; then the hive hums.

Then from the sheddings underneath the beech,  
Where squirrels rout, the flock of pigeons goes,  
Their wings like sticks in battle giving blows,  
The hundred hurtling to be out of reach.

Their wings flash white above a darker fan,  
In drifts the colour of the smoke they pass,  
They disappear above the valley grass,  
They re-appear against the woodland tan.

Now that the valley woodlands are all bare,  
Their flocks drift daily thus, now up, now down,  
Blue-grey against the sodden of the brown,  
Grey-blue against the twig-tips, thin in air.

It is a beauty none but autumn has,  
These drifts of blue-grey birds whom Nature binds  
Into communities of single minds,  
From early leaf-fall until Candlemas.

So in the failing Life when Death and Dread,  
With axe and mongrel, stalk the withering wood,  
The pigeons of the spirit's solitude  
Clatter to glory at the stealthy tread,

And each, made deathless by the Spirit's joy,  
Launch from the leaves that have forgotten green,  
And from the valley seek another scene,  
That Dread can darken not, nor Death destroy.

### AUTUMN PLOUGHING

AFTER the ranks of stubble have lain bare,  
And field mice and the finches' beaks have found  
The last spilled seed corn left upon the ground;  
And no more swallows miracle in air;

When the green tuft no longer hides the hare,  
And dropping starling flights at evening come;  
When birds, except the robin, have gone dumb,  
And leaves are rustling downwards everywhere;

## AUTUMN PLOUGHING

Then, out, with the great horses, come the ploughs,  
And all day long the slow procession goes,  
Darkening the stubble fields with broadening strips.

Gray sea-gulls settle after to carouse:  
Harvest prepares upon the harvest's close,  
Before the blackbird pecks the scarlet hips.

## THE WAGGON-MAKER

I HAVE made tales in verse, but this man made  
Waggon of elm to last a hundred years;  
The blacksmith forged the rims and iron gears,  
His was the magic that the wood obeyed.

Each deft device that country wisdom bade,  
Or farmers' practice needed, he preserved.  
He wrought the subtle contours, straight and curved,  
Only by eye, and instinct of the trade.

No weakness, no offence in any part,  
It stood the strain in mired fields and roads  
In all a century's struggle for its bread;  
Bearing, perhaps, eight thousand heavy loads.  
Beautiful always as a work of art,  
Homing the bride, and harvest, and men dead.

## PARTRIDGES

HERE they lie mottled to the ground unseen,  
This covey linked together from the nest.  
The nosing pointers put them from their rest,  
The wings whirr, the guns flash and all has been.

The lucky crumple to the clod, shot clean,  
The wounded drop and hurry and lie close;  
The sportsmen praise the pointer and his nose,  
Until he scents the hidens and is keen.

Tumbled in bag with rabbits, pigeons, hares,  
The crumpled corpses have forgotten all  
The covey's joys of strong or gliding flight.

But when the planet lamps the coming night,  
The few survivors seek those friends of theirs;  
The twilight hears and darkness hears them call.

### THE TOWERER

OLD Jarge, Hal, Walter and I, the Rector and Bill,  
The old red setter and Joe, the retriever, Bess,  
Went out in the cider time for something to kill,  
Past Arthur's Camp, a couple of miles, I guess.

We came in the noon of the blue September day  
To a tongue of grass thrust into a cleft of copse,  
Berries were black and plump on the changing spray,  
A dwindled spring went over its lip in drops.

We stopped to drink at the spring, Hal, Walter and I,  
The retriever, Bess, the old red setter and Joe.  
A covey went up with a whirr and the guns let fly,  
The birds went skimming the trees towards Barney's Low.

They fired two last long shots, the Rector and Bill,  
A feather came out of a bird, but the bird went on.  
"Hit him," they said; we muttered, "You didn't kill."  
Over the tips of the trees the covey was gone.

The hit bird swerved from the line of the covey's charge,  
Over the grass of the field we watched him rise:  
"Got him," the Rector said. "Her towers," said Jarge.  
We saw him breast like a lark the hot blue skies.

He climbed the air till he struggled in sky alone,  
Straining and beating up on a battling breast,  
Then paused, then dropped with a thump upon bounding  
bone:  
Joe brought him in; we bagged him up with the rest.



At covey-call time in the dusk September eve,  
We loitered home together and shared the kill:  
Nine brace, three rabbits, a hare: we all took leave;  
Jarge took the dogs: the moon came over the hill.

Poor Bess, the retriever, died, her muzzle all white;  
A run-away cart ran over the spaniel, Joe;  
Jarge died of a quart of rum next Christmas night;  
The old red setter went west, oh, ages ago.

Bill died from shock of a fall, as his heart was weak,  
The Rector lingered to die of a sheer old age;  
Walter went down with a stroke and could not speak,  
He, too, has gathered his goods and drawn his wage.

Only Hal and myself of the nine remain,  
And Hal's forgotten the bird, forgotten the shoot;  
The grass, the wood and the spring are here in my brain,  
With the dogs and the wine-leaved brambles black with  
fruit.

I think of the towering bird with its choking lung,  
Its bursting heart, its struggle to scale the sky,  
And wonder when we shall all be tried and hung  
For the blue September crime when we made it die.

## THE EYES

I REMEMBER a tropic dawn before turn-to,  
The ship becalmed, the east in glow, a dimness,  
Dark still, of fleece clouds mottled to the zenith,  
The seamen as men dead upon the deck,  
Save three who watched, dark statues they, dark bronze.  
All things were silent save uneasy gear,  
So silent that one heard the flying fish  
Startling in frisk and plopping in the sea,  
So many that we knew that multitudes  
Of living things were near us though unseen.

Marvellously the fleece clouds changed from dim  
Through every lovely colour into gold,  
And then through every light to intense gleam,  
Until a miracle of burning eyes  
Looked down upon our thirty distinct souls.

Each of us and the fishes in the deeps,  
And every flitting sprite that leapt and sped,  
Those watchers knew and called each by his name.

### THE SPANISH MAIN

Low, dull-green hills with scrub and little trees,  
A long, straight pier that widens to a wharf,  
On which three lines of freight-cars bake in the sun,  
And one tall travelling derrick stands up black.

At the pier-base, a beach and tiny town:  
Two hundred little huts with reddish roofs,  
Straggle along the selvage of the bay,  
Thicker and higher nearer to the pier,  
Scanter to eastward where the lighthouse stands,  
A thin white finger near a river bridge.

Southward, the hills are higher, and the bay  
Something like Anzac; on the beach a wreck  
Blisters; to eastward lies another wreck,  
Two masts and four old davits all burnt black,  
With one limp wire guy not worth the salving.

Northward, a three-mile island like a pier  
Hedges the bay: a league of surf is on it.  
Beyond, appalling surf breaks on a cliff.  
Two speedy little fish-boats sail for fish;  
Each sets a big lateen and tiny jib,  
The foot of the lateen topped high aloft  
Upon a bending boom: they fly like birds.  
An old man and a boy are in the nearest:  
The old man steers and hauls a silver fish.

We discharge cases from the after hold;  
 Twelve negroes slowly load them in the cars;  
 They are superb men, dark as dark-brown horses,  
 They move with grace, bare-armed up to the shoulder.  
 They wear blue cotton trowsers and white singlets,  
 And very old, crushed, yellow straw sombreros.  
 They have such beauty in their supple strength;  
 They dance as they bear cases. On the pier,  
 Two pale brown men, in purple bathing-drawers,  
 Walk bare-foot and bare-headed in the sun.  
 They have been diving to inspect the piles  
 Crushed by our starboard broadside as we berthed.

More natives at the gangway offer wares:  
 Red moccasins, the polished horns of cows,  
 Grass-woven purses, boxes of split cane,  
 Stuffed baby alligators, rattles, gourds,  
 Blue wool-work slippers, and grey lucent shells,  
 And boxes of split straw that look like muslin.  
 They dust these jealously with cotton cloths.

Twin brothers with their arms about each other  
 Stand at the pier-end, staring at the ship.

### NOMBRE DE DIOS

THE jungle reaches to the water's edge.  
 Behind where once the city stood, a valley,  
 Doubtless a water course, slants inland westward  
 Between low hills; inland are higher hills,  
 How high I cannot see, the rain is on them  
 In swathes and fading smokings of gray cloud.  
 Close to the city site a gleam of sun  
 Lights up the dark green and the brighter green  
 Of jungle near the shore, and the surf shines.

Now, to the eastward of the bay, I see  
 What Drake and his companions called the Mount.  
 It is still levelled as the Spaniards left it,  
 But all grown green with jungle like the rest.  
 Drake, when he took the city, hurried there  
 To find if cannon had been mounted yet.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is three hundred years since any cannon  
 Were fired here, or any city stood.  
 For half a lifetime I have longed to see  
 This port of old romance: it opens . . . see.

\* \* \* \* \*

Slanting across the harbour mouth, a knoll,  
 Dark, almost black, juts from a blacker hill  
 Like a dark finger pointing to the site;  
 A rock breaks water near the harbour entrance.

\* \* \* \* \*

That gully in the coast is all it is,  
 The site of thirty houses built of wood,  
 A wooden church, two treasure barns of stone,  
 An earthwork, and an unsafe anchorage  
 Where ships would drag with seven anchors out.  
 Drake's blood was shed there and his heart was broken,  
 Drake burned it to the jungle that it is.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yet, what a tribute to the strength of Spain,  
 The builders came by ship four thousand miles,  
 'Stablished their paltry village and endured,  
 The steam, the heat, the thirst, the flies, the fever.  
 Then in their manhood hacked the jungle through,  
 Found the Pacific, builded ships and sailed  
 Onward, undaunted, to the unknown world.

## PORTO BELLO

THE port is unsuspected from the east,  
 Slowly the bay draws open, with still water,  
 Deeper and deeper yet, to the calm pond,  
 Hot, stagnant, wrinkleless, of palest gray.

There is the city at the end at last,  
 The dirty, gray stone platform of the fort,  
 To left of what remains, a few small houses,  
 The little river and a scarlet barn.

Once all the bells in England rang with joy  
That we had captured this; we have two poems,  
A painting and commemorative pots  
(Jugs and quart mugs) which celebrate the feat.

Two generations since, an English ship  
Lay here surveying; one aboard her told me  
That all her seamen were beset with boils  
Like Egypt in the Book of Exodus;  
Their chart is still the sailor's guidance here.

How many English bones lie underneath  
That stirless water, Drake's men; Morgan's men;  
The buccaneers; all Admiral Hosier's men;  
The men with Vernon; christened in the fonts  
Of English churches, and now welded white  
With shells, or waving scarlet with soft tendrils,  
Part of a sea-floor where no anchors fall  
Nor any shadow of an English ship.

Near, in the blueness of the haze, an island  
Rises before us as we pass the port;  
It is Escudo, where Sir Francis Drake  
"Yielded his valiant spirit like a Christian."  
Some say "His heart is buried there": perhaps.  
His body lies beneath us somewhere here.  
The surf breaks on the island as we pass.

## CANAL ZONE

AMONG these hills, twelve generations since,  
The skirt-of-fortune-plucker, Francis Drake,  
Saw from the watch-tree with the Indian prince  
The bright Pacific basking like a snake.

Eastward and Westward lay the scenes achieved,  
Southward, the deed to do, to Northward, foam  
Lapsed on the grave, that waited, as it heaved,  
The guest with darings done, not going home.

Now, new adventures hold. Across the track  
Where once he stopped the treasure-mules, a 'plane  
Roars to the air-base, bringing tourists back;  
The spill-way thunders from the inland sea;  
But quiet are the bonnet and the bee:  
The Dragon slumbers beside sleeping Spain.

### THE SPANISH MAIN SCHOONER

A LITTLE wooden schooner, painted white,  
Lofty and beamy, likely to be fast,  
Lies at the wharf beside the papaw sellers.  
She has white wooden after-rails raised high,  
A well-steeved bowsprit and a flaring sheer.

She has a deck-house just abaft the mainmast,  
It brings the main-boom high above the deck,  
The door is open, there are bunks within,  
And yellow trousers dangling from a peg.

Outside it, on a box, a shining tin  
Of soapy water holds the Captain's shirt.  
A cock and hen find pickings on the deck,  
Awnings of worn-out sail keep out the sun.

Her gear is white manila, nearly new.  
All is in choicest order, the mast-shrouds  
Are set-up by a method new to me.  
The shrouds turn-in on double purchase-blocks,  
The laniards reeve through dead-eyes on the rail.  
The masts are raked, each little thing aloft  
Is cared for with unusual seamanship.

Her seamen are on deck, four graceful negroes  
Wearing white cotton clothing patched with blue,  
Their arms are sunburned black up to the shoulder.  
They stand below the mainmast, swaying up  
Her mainsail white with cotton, the gaff jolts,  
The mainsail ripples out, the negroes cry  
Ahi, Aho. Upon her transom-stern  
In white, on a green oval, is her name,  
The SALVADOR DEL MUNDO. Cartagena.

## A BALLAD OF SIR FRANCIS DRAKE

BEFORE Sir Francis put to sea,  
He told his love, "My dear,  
When I am gone, you wait for me,  
Though you wait for seven year."

His love, who was redder than the rose,  
And sweeter than the may,  
Said, "I will wait till summer snows  
And winter fields bear hay.

"I'll wait until the ice is hot,  
And July sun is cold,  
Until the cliffs of Dover rot,  
And the cliffs of Devon mould."

Sir Francis went aboard his ship,  
Her sails were sheeted home,  
The water gurgled at her lip  
And whitened into foam.

And months went by, but no more word  
Came from that roving soul  
Than comes from the Mother Carey bird  
That nests at the South Pole.

In the seventh year men gave up hope,  
And swore that he was dead.  
They had the bell tolled with the rope  
And the burial service read.

His love, who was redder than the rose,  
Mourned for him long and long,  
But even grief for a lover goes  
When life is running strong.

And many a man beset her way  
Who thought it Paradise  
To gaze at her lovely eyes and say  
That her eyes were stars, not eyes.

And so she promised a nobleman  
 When the ninth-year hay was hauled,  
 And before the harvest-home began  
 Her marriage banns were called.

The wedding-day came bright and fair,  
 The bells rang up and down,  
 The bridesmaids in their white were there  
 And the parson in his gown.

The rosy bride came up the aisle,  
 The page-boys bore her train;  
 She stood by the groom a little while  
 To be made one out of twain.

Not one of all within the church  
 Thought of Sir Francis Drake.  
 A crash made the transept columns lurch  
 And the central tower quake.

A cannon-ball came thundering by  
 Between the bride and groom.  
 The girl said, "Francis wonders why  
 There's someone in his room.

"Francis is homing from the seas,  
 He has sent this message here.  
 I would rather be wife to Francis, please,  
 Than the lady of a pcer."

Ere the priest could start his talk again,  
 A man rushed in to say,  
 "Here is Drake come home with the wealth  
     of Spain.  
 His ships are in the Bay."

The noble said with courtly grace,  
 "It would be a wiser plan  
 If I let Sir Francis take my place,  
 And I will be Best Man."



## SWEET FRIENDS

PRINT not my life nor letters; put them by:  
When I am dead let memory of me die.  
Blessed be those who in their mercy heed  
This heartfelt prayer of mine to Adam's Seed;  
Blessed be they, but may a curse pursue  
All who reject this living prayer, and do.

*From*  
COUNTRY SCENE  
(PUBLISHED BY MESSRS. COLLINS)



## ON ENGLAND

**W**HAT is this England, whom the draughtsmen print  
As such and such, in ever-changing guise,  
Now as a fat boor, whiskered and unwise,  
Now as a shielded, trident-bearing Queen,  
Now as a lion, now as a St. George  
Thrusting a trampled dragon through the gorge?  
From what known image do they take their hint?  
Where is such England met, such England seen?

England is with us where the roadway goes,  
A land of downs inestimably fair,  
With cornfields, apple-orchards, fruits and spires,  
Night-glaring slagheaps, where men swink at fires,  
Cities with chimneys blackening the air,  
Ships in whatever harbour a tide flows,  
A million gardens, each with lily and rose,  
And football, though the grass be blasted bare.

England with mucky arms, and cheer, and spanner  
Kneels at your car to help you in distress;  
On many a bridge in many a crazy ship,  
England in oilskins keeps a stiffened lip;  
In burnt or freezing lands beyond the sea  
England will welcome you to England's banner  
(The chances of the football cup, and tea).  
England comes nearer when the troubles press.

No man can praise her, she is full of fault;  
No man can blame her, she is full of good,  
Kindness, stupidity and hardihood  
Wisdom and gentleness, the sweet and salt.  
She grows more wise and gentle, growing old,  
New stars arise, to light her to exalt  
The Life within her borders above gold;  
New buds are springing from the ancient wood.

To these, and to her new-crowned King and Queen,  
Be blessing upon blessing, late and soon,  
The hundred millions of her virtuous dead  
Watch over her and guard her as she goes.  
That which has been  
Is past, another England lies ahead,  
With beauty on her bosom as a rose  
And sunrise springing at her setting moon.

*From*  
TRIBUTE TO BALLET  
(PUBLISHED BY MESSRS. COLLINS)



## THE LOVELY SWAN

I HEARD men mutter of you, "She will die . . .  
That gentle Swan is sped, her white plumes cast  
Lovely she was, but she has danced her last;  
One planet more slips westward from the sky."

Then, when that Ballet from the time gone by  
Played, but not bringing you, as in the past,  
I thought, "Her spirit wanders in the vast . . .  
Under the primrose roots her beauties lie."

Another June, with other roses, came,  
There, in the theatre, we read your name.

"Can it be she?" we hoped; but doubt denied.

Then, lo, to faery horn and violin,  
You, given back to life, came floating in.  
O, in that happy instant all Death died.

## SUR LES POINTES

THE time is near, my sweet,  
'Tis almost here, my sweet,  
After this strain has died,  
You will appear, my sweet.

Now, on the strings, my sweet,  
The clear cue rings, my sweet,  
Upon the note you glide  
Out of the wings, my sweet.

Rapt, rapt, in dear delight,  
In the moon's dream, in white,  
One with the starry grass  
And with the starry night.



White, white, you gleam, my sweet,  
White, white, you pass, my sweet,  
Like dew on grass, my sweet,  
Like mankind's dream, my sweet.

Still as the down you drift,  
Light as the mist you lift,  
White as the snows you float,  
Light as the moonbeam mote.

O white bird from the moon  
So soon to cease, my sweet,  
Out of your peace, my sweet,  
Come soon again, come soon.

## WHO IS THAT OLD FELLOW IN THE WINGS?

"We are young, friend, like the flowers,  
You are old, friend, like the tree,  
What concern have you with ours?  
You are dying, we're to be."

It is very true, I'm dying,  
You are roses still in bud . . .  
And the truth is something flying  
Twixt the arrow and the blood.

*From*  
GAUTAMA THE ENLIGHTENED  
SHOPPING IN OXFORD



## SHOPPING IN OXFORD

**T**WENTY-FOUR years ago, I wandered down  
An unknown, unseen, midnight Oxford Town,  
And crossed the Thames, and paused upon the bridge:  
To note the smudge of wood on Hinksey Ridge;  
Then went, by summer hedgerows, up the hill  
In dewy dimness, all things lying still,  
To hear the night-jars in the pine-wood spinning  
And the first blackbird tell the day beginning.

Since then, my happy days have all been spent  
By this gray town for Learning excellent;  
Some of her scholars whom the world commends  
Have been for years my neighbours and my friends.  
As to the World and Time, she is to me  
A Sovran City of Civility.

Others have told her power, who have known.  
A vagrant, I, not rightfully her own,  
Who draw from her not Learning, having none,  
But yet the kindness shared with everyone,  
The grace and beauty scattered up and down,  
And this in special, single to the town,  
That those within her shops in courtesy  
Repay the buyers whatsoever they buy.

Twenty-four years of purchase, in amount,  
Mean, many parcels more than I can count.  
In all that little life-time, year by year,  
The weekly wants have brought me shopping here.  
And knowing buying thus, I wonder well  
What sort of life it is, to stand and sell.

The sellers stand, to cherish all day long  
The hundred wants of the demanding throng;  
To bear, however much they inly burn,  
The rude, the pert, the thruster out of turn;

The meddlesome, whose fidget-fingers change  
The place of goods that daintinesses range;  
The troublesome-fastidious whose desires  
Are, to see all, yet never to be buyers;  
Or, possibly still worse, the unprecise,  
His want unclear, who makes the labour thrice.  
And many others bring a special hell  
Doubtless, sometimes, to those who stand to sell,  
Who, whether well or ill, or hot or freezing,  
Seek out the buyer's pleasure and are pleasing.

That they are pleasing, all who ever buy  
In Oxford shops can surely testify:  
Of all the shops I name or do not name  
I and their other buyers can make claim  
That, of our purchased parcels laid in pile  
Each one was rendered friendly, with a smile,  
A charming word or jest that gave a grace  
Of silver to the penny's commonplace,  
So that a spirit companied the thing  
Borne in the paper package tied with string,  
So that it seemed a thing not bought and sold  
But given, out of friendship and worth gold.

It is a pleasant pastime to go eyeing  
Where things attract and tempt you into buying;  
The dustless shining things which subtly wait  
Yourself, the willing fish for this the bait.  
Among these verses I have written down  
The fruits of shopping about Oxford town,  
Each with the happy memory of faces  
Who greet me friendly at the customed places,  
And of the streets in which the windows shine,  
That are the magnets to these friends of mine;  
For here, new pleasures purchasers attend,  
They find the looked-for treasure and a friend.

I seek few treasures, except books, the tools  
Of those celestial souls the world calls fools.  
Happy the morning giving time to stop  
An hour at once in Basil Blackwell's shop,

There, in the Broad, within whose booky house  
Half England's scholars nibble books or browse.  
Where'er they wander blessed fortune theirs,  
Books to the ceiling, other books upstairs.  
Books, doubtless in the cellar, and behind  
Romantic bays where iron ladders wind,  
And in odd nooks sometimes in little shelves,  
Lintot's and Tonson's calf-bound dainty twelves.

Many fair windows look on Oxford streets  
Bright to the passing fly with booky sweets,  
I know of seven others, but, alas,  
Prudence and taxes make one guard' e pass'.

If books be suns, there is a moon's delight  
About the things which help a man to write,  
There is a joy arranging like the cook  
The many things which help to make the book,  
The paper bluish, blue-lined, toughish, glazed,  
Which (when I wrote with pens) I ever praised;  
The canvas note-books, taking to the eyes,  
The paste-pots precious in a last revise;  
The black and scarlet inks, the pens they feed  
Of metal, quill or glass, or gold or reed;  
The blotting-paper, pink or white, which sips  
The damps of Helicon with thirsty lips;  
The rubber-bands, or metal-weights, which guard  
The written chapter on its base of card;  
The envelopes, of twenty different shapes,  
Each gummy-tongued above a mouth that gapes,  
Each with a void in which will some day lurk  
The chaptered, numbered, named, completed work.  
The crayons, too, blue, green and yellow-tipped,  
Useful for marking bundled manuscript;  
And things with ever brief but useful lives,  
Pencils and little pocket paper-knives;  
And, waiting still the Greek seal I affix,  
Cardinal-coloured wax in slender sticks.

Then the black-bright, smooth-running, clicking, clean  
Brushed, oiled and dainty typewriting machine,

With tins of ribbons waiting for the blows  
Which soon will hammer them to verse and prose;  
These and their plenishings, I love to tell them  
And love the happy houses where they sell them.

Then, too, the Printers, piled up to the roofs  
With old work done and drying poster proofs,  
With letterings in red, announcements, sales,  
And damp, smudged galleys fluttering from nails;  
The perfume of the drug that poets drink  
(The brew they sometimes die of), printers' ink;  
And close at hand the music poets bless,  
The lift and trample of the printing press.  
What memories I have, correcting versions  
Of proofs for Recitations and Diversions,  
In days of peace when every year's July  
Brought us a Festival of Poetry.

All who love books must love the Binder's skill  
That fights all foes that work a volume ill,  
That slays the boring worm and nulls the fox  
(Who yellows leaves like lichen upon rocks);  
That smooths the tattered, dogs'-eared crumpled page,  
That brightens youth and glorifies old age,  
That keeps old leather sides upon their backs  
And scorns to shear dear pages with his axe.  
Maltbys, the binders, re-create books thus;  
And many a royal binding glorious  
Of blue morocco or white vellum pure  
They have made fair, in beauty to endure.  
And cases, too, they make, in which are slipped  
Old printer's copy, type or manuscript,  
These like the mummy of old joy, to wait  
A maid's cremation in some unknown grate.  
These things St. Michael's binders subtly build  
Of linenned card, and having lettered, gild.  
All these, it once has been delight to buy  
As workman's fittings to the craft, I ply.

Though books delight me, sometimes music seems  
As sure a gateway to a world of dreams

Therefore I sometimes tread romantic floors  
 Lined to the ceiling with recorded scores,  
 Where, each in's box, the music-lovers stay  
 Hearing ten tunes and wishing nine away.  
 There, as the artist must, I follow fast,  
 The one, though interrupted, to the last,  
 And bear its black disc home and set it going  
 And tread its peace in moonlights out of knowing.  
 That room of records keeps the faery keys  
 Of gardens lovelier than th' Hesperides,  
 Of wells more liquid with eternal thought  
 Than Lully drank of or de Leon sought;  
 Therefore I see no records lifted down  
 Without the thought: "There Joy goes into town."

And other tools I sometimes come to find;  
 Carpenter's tools delighting hand and mind;  
 Vices to clutch the work, and crows with claws,  
 And saws and tenon-saws and metal-saws;  
 Chisels and firmer chisels, gouges, clippers,  
 The tiniest brads, the neatest little nippers.  
 Minutest screw-eyes, nails and screws of brass,  
 And drills so subtle that they bend, alas.  
 And other goods I sometimes come to seek  
 Sticks of hard woods and little scraps of teak,  
 And thread of many sorts to be the rope  
 Aboard a model not yet more than hope;  
 The paints and brushes for her, and the oil  
 Which gives such polish after so much toil.  
 What fun to buy these things, and to have known  
 In him who sells skill greater than your own.

While life is energy and blood is red  
 Some parts of shopping must be daily bread:—  
 Therefore, I praise the bakehouse standing sentry  
 Close upon Gloucester Green at Friar's Entry,  
 Wherein one buys the crusty, fragrant, sweet,  
 Hot brown bread, "precious as the gods do eat".  
 And scones so full of symmetry and light  
 That the glad tooth is half afraid to bite;  
 And buns that make the questing spirit see  
 All Chelsea ever was or Bath could be.



In praising bakers, let me also praise  
Those who refresh the weary on their ways;  
The Shamrock tea-rooms, up the narrow stairs,  
What scones, what jellies and what jams are theirs.  
There, as the weary rest in Gothic nooks,  
They hear the Oxford bells and bless the cooks.

Man needs instruction, daily bread and rest;  
Convention adds, he should be shod and dressed.  
And England has a lack which all deplore  
The suit for work within and out of door;  
Such as the French blue blouse or English smock  
One not in use, the other not in stock.  
Till lately, too, she kept a crazy rule,  
"In summer seasons no man must be cool".  
I was the first that order to defy,  
I wandered cool in Oxford only I.  
I praise the tailors who, (perhaps in fear)  
Helped this insane, wise, easy pioneer.  
I well remember in that early stage  
Men's angry envy or their jealous rage;  
But I was cool and smiled to see the scowl  
Glare from the furry coat and woollen cowl,  
I bless the skilful men who keep my form  
In summer tranquil and in winter warm.

Then those who during many years have shod  
The feet upon whose leather I have trod,  
In all five continents and seven seas  
And twenty-six of man's communities.  
Upon their leather, whereso'ere I roam,  
I have set forth and later wandered home  
And ever find, re-entering the place  
The same swift helpful tact and courteous grace.

Then those, across the way, that fragrant cave  
Of joys of life and guards against the grave;  
Whence, besides drugs, the buyer carries home  
The sponge that sluices and the soaps that foam,  
Throat-blessing gargles, and the scented, nice,  
Pungent, sub-Tropic, cuttled dentifrice;

The shaving-brush whereon the lathers swoon  
Being plucked at dawn from badgers of the Moon;  
Boracic crystals, lint and cataplasms  
And cures for all from pernio to spasms.

In Market Street, a glittering shop there is  
Pounce-like and sharp with many cutleries  
Of knives, and the most cunning scissors made,  
And many a different kind of razor-blade.  
Since edges have meant progress, sages stop  
Always, to eye the wonders in this shop.

In many a morning I have gone to choose,  
Groceries, fruits and sweets at Grimby Hughes,  
That crowded house where all that man has dreamt  
Of dainty niceness is in sight to tempt.  
Then, the Cadena, crowded with the wise  
Who seek fresh-ground the coffee that they prize  
And bear it home in paper-bags imprest  
Scenting the street with Araby the Blest.  
There, too, a counter stands of sweet things sweeter  
Than tongue can ever tell in words and metre.

Then in the Market there will always be  
The stalls to tempt one, beautiful to see,  
And to remember long in after hours  
For some undreamed-of ecstasy of flowers,  
Or some strange fruit, or subtle alien plant  
Remote among her spines, perverse, askant;  
Or rapturous words from little girls and boys  
In Paradise from looking at the toys.  
Even in time of war, the shops display  
The wealth of sea and land in their array,  
The sides of beef still dangle from the hooks;  
The meat-axe chops for critic-witted cooks;  
And damp on marble slabs the ice amid  
The fish forget the pure through which they glid.

And other shops there are where none can pry  
Unless with peril of a bankruptcy;  
The charming shops of old and lovely gear  
From what were homes of folk no longer here,

The chairs, the stuffs, the gems, the yellowed lace,  
The fans once cool on some forgotten face;  
The shawl where silken butterflies still glance  
Whose owner saw Carlotta Grisi dance;  
The dainty havings sadly left behind  
By ancient love and elegance of mind;  
The necklet-lockets still containing hair  
From loves, now ghosts, long mingled in the air;  
Enamelled boxes haunted by the faint  
Sweet scent or tint of powder or of paint;  
The netted purse, whose owner long since went  
Under the spade, her last spade-guinea spent;  
The miniatures, un-named, of folk unknown;  
And saddest yet, the painted eye alone.  
Among the gilt, the silk and old brocade  
Of ruined homes which past affections made,  
Sometimes a mirror, chair, or brodered piece,  
Is singled thence, to take another lease  
Of human use and sometimes seekers' eyes  
Searching the print-pile come upon a prize  
A Durer or a Rembrandt; or a drawing  
Of ships disdainful of the billows clawing,  
(Such prizes have been mine) and sometimes, too,  
Among the porcelain, all white and blue,  
Of early Worcester, one perceives the bowl,  
The bell-like, swan-like, chipless, crackless, whole  
Desired piece that summer's fragrant stir  
Shall fill with rose-leaves or with lavender.

The common thing, if blessed by head and heart,  
Becomes uncommon as a work of art;  
So these who sell to those who only buy  
Have made their sellings bright in memory.  
Thanks cannot pay what kindness freely gives,  
But the glad kindness runs the world and lives.  
I live the gladder for the daily thought  
"They gave me golden what my copper bought."

PAVILASTUKAY



## PAVILASTUKAY

OF all the many things that men abhor  
The worst, comprising every ill in sum,  
To Jonnox, was abominable war  
The smiter of mankind in martyrdom;  
And lest another shaking war should come  
To shatter all the preciousness of men  
Jonnox was eloquent with voice and pen.

At first, there seemed to him a tiny chance  
That, after the last war, men might unite  
Defending Man and his inheritance  
From governmental total lack of light  
The dusky chance soon disappeared in night,  
And Jonnox sighed and took it for a rule  
That god's own image liked to be a fool.

For now he saw unscrupulous small bands  
Make use of this discovery and seize  
Their Nation's powers with their bloody hands  
To turn the future whither they should please.  
He thought "Praetorian guards were such as these  
Now the Augustan quiet comes to crash.  
No light henceforth; just fire, smoke and ash.

While there are tigers, antelopes will die;  
So much is clear; but this, that mature men,  
Sharing a little glimmer of the sky  
Should make their heritage a slaughter-pen,  
And blast their penny comforts out of ken  
Because a farthing scoundrel orders so,  
Not thus do planets in their Heaven go.

No, they obey a ruling from the Sun  
And sweep their starry orbits without clash  
Roving the void and singing as they run  
Obeying without dread of any lash.

Onward without reward those wonders thresh,  
And Man a speck upon the least of note,  
Gives his brief gasp to cut his brother's throat.

Gone is all hope of European peace  
The yapping bladder, and the bloody blade  
That preached and started murder, cannot cease  
Only by blood can murder be allayed,  
Blood is their doctrine, spilling blood their trade;  
And England knows that, unprepared as ever,  
She, only, will resist them, (or endeavour).

Searching the Press for comfort, he would find  
The leaders saying "War is Nature's course.  
As tiger ruins deer, the master-mind  
Ruins the dodderer by use of force.  
Nature abhors both pity and remorse,  
And stamps out both" . . . still . . . Jonnox' thought remained.  
"Man is not Nature, but a something gained. . . .

A something gained from Nature, at great cost,  
By very great illusions somehow won,  
And now in deadly peril to be lost  
By darknesses' denial of the Sun . . .  
When gods are false, O, seek another One,  
Seek swiftly, seek, before all hope is dead."

Here, nervous breakdown brought him to his bed.

They gave him bromide and prescribed a rest,  
Tonics with iron and a change of scene;  
They said he was sub-consciously obsessed  
By nineteen-hundred, fourteen to eighteen;  
They gave injections culled from bine and bean  
And many different glands, and then, away  
They shipped him foreign for a holiday.

Although the threat of war made coming back  
To men with any forethought, most unsure,  
Jonnox embarked upon the eastward track  
Across the ever tameless, ever pure.  
He went to seek the sun and find a cure

Where tawny beggars ask for English pennies;  
His shipmates played deck-quoits and table tennis.

Europe, its climates and its costumes ceased;  
In silvery haste the flying fishes swept  
And still the ship strode on into the East  
And still the table-tennis pipped and pepped.  
Nightly, to negro noise, the jazzers stepped.  
They reached Serak, their seventh port of call  
And moored off Purovana's fortress wall.

Jonnox was told that they would fuel ship  
There in the berth at any rate till four;  
The passengers had time to take a trip  
To see the cinemas or sports ashore;  
There would be pony-racing; but a score  
Of other lures were printed in the Guide.  
This Jonnox read, to help him to decide.

He read that Spagha shooting might be good  
In normal seasons, till the end of May:  
That the bazaar's bright, coloured multitude  
Of eastern silkwork was a rich display:  
That at a place called Pavilastukay,  
Deep in the jungle, to be reached by bus,  
A ruined temple was thought marvellous.

Other delights were offered, but the rest  
Were such as eastern tourists always meet.  
To Jonnox' mind, the ruins seemed the best;  
A dozen others thought them worth the heat.  
Jonnox was sure, that to escape the beat  
Of table-tennis balls for a few hours  
Would strew the day with (figurative) flowers.

Straightway, the party went ashore to find  
Conveyance to the ruins in the wood.  
They cursed the bus because it had no blind;  
They cursed the going, for the track was rude.  
They cursed the beastly lunch of foreign food,  
A sort of curried monkey, done with ghee.  
Then forth they strode, to curse what they should see.



But coming forth into the blinding heat  
To struggle through the jungle to the stones,  
A distant noise of water sounded sweet  
In Jonnox' ear; it stirred him to the bones.  
A temple, with the gods upon their thrones,  
Might be impressive, but in heat appalling  
Jonnox was tempted by that water falling.

He asked the Guide, "Where is the waterfall?"  
He, pointing, said "Him jungle; muchee thick."  
Then Jonnox: "Can I get to it at all?"  
The Guide: "Him stingee snake; him bitee tick"  
The other tourists said "Oh, Jonnox; quick"  
"Come," said the Guide, "But vellee little way . . .  
Nice temple, see, of Pavilastukay . . ."

But Jonnox said, "No temple, thanks, for me.  
If there's a river near, I mean to swim"  
So, when the others went, he shewed a fee  
To natives there that they should pilot him  
Down to the water through the jungle dim  
Which when they understood, they did, and bared him  
A sight for which no guide-book had prepared him.

He reached a space through which a river flowed  
Over a fall most exquisitely bright.  
Clear-coloured marbles kept it in its road;  
And hard beside, exulting in the light  
A Palace stood, a thing of such delight  
That Jonnox thought, "The temple of the Sun . . .  
So here I am; there can be only one."

But, listening for pistol-shots and song,  
His fellow-tourists' sign, and hearing nought  
Save the cascade, he knew that he was wrong  
This was no temple whither tourists sought.  
No rideacock with guns instead of thought,  
No guide-book writer, even, had been here.  
None but the birds came hither year by year.

It had been hidden from the white man's eyes  
Till then, perhaps; he, Jonnox, was the first.

The jungle-thrust had had it for a prize  
Creepers and blossom had it all immerst.  
But though the engulfing weed had done its worst  
It did its best; no creeper could defile  
That which Man's quickened soul had stamped with style.

So Jonnox, gazing, muttered "It is plain.  
There was a City here; the Temple shewn  
Must be but one of many that remain.  
This that I see is utterly unknown.  
For such a miracle of carven stone  
Would bring a thousand tourists week by week  
O miracle, if you could only speak."

The carven marble edged the river-side.  
A fountain still miraculously played;  
The roots had bursten many jointings wide  
And cornices had fallen and decayed  
But still a majesty of planning stayed  
That said to Jonnox' soul from everything:—  
"Man's spirit fashioned me to house her King."

The natives, who had brought him watched his face.  
He thought "they have observed me; and they know  
That I shall not betray this wondrous place  
To tourist-folk who only come and go."  
He asked the leader of the band to shew  
A way into the ruins; the man pointed  
A narrow, trodden breach through stones disjointed.

Still shaken by the splendour he beheld,  
He clambered up the gapway in the wall  
And gazed upon that monument of eld  
In wavering shadow from the fountain-fall.  
Some tiny deer who had no fear at all  
Grazed on the courtyard grass; the buck raised head  
And stared at Jonnox once but had no dread.

Some ribald monkeys talked, the fountain splashed;  
Beneath the fall, the rainbows gleamed and faded;  
Ospreys were fishing where the water lashed;  
The parrots screamed and jangled as they raided;

The bubbles of the cataract abraded  
Against the marble wall; the tiny deer  
Wrenched at the grass, eyed Jonnox and drew near.

They moved aside for him as he descended  
Into those courts of grass, so green and cool,  
So living with the mind of someone splendid  
Whom Time the enemy had put from rule.  
The purple-blossomed creeper choked the pool  
And had destroyed the fountains, save the one  
Still tossing silver leafage at the sun.

Slowly, still marvelling, he crossed the grass  
Towards the Palace, thinking "This was wrought  
By men who never let Life's minute pass  
But stretched their eager hands to it, and caught,  
And pressed this glory from it, strength and thought!  
Working as one, to this undying thing  
In praise of Man, Earth's only god and king."

Whichever way he turned, the City shewed;  
The marble wharfings stood, where ships had lain;  
Streets opened inland, all with ruin strowed;  
The market shone with flowers bright from rain;  
Then court on painted court began again,  
With frescoed fables in the cloistered walks  
Where now the birds plucked cherries from the stalks.

Often, in places where the encroaching wood  
Had touched and clutched yet failed to overcome  
Leaving a building perfect, Jonnox stood,  
Expecting lovely citizens to come;  
No footstep struck, each singing voice was dumb,  
No citizens, save painted shapes were there,  
But those he judged unutterably fair.

Sometimes, they were so beautiful, it seemed  
That they were living, more than living, bright  
As spirits from eternity who streamed  
Out of their heaven into earthly light  
Divinest fireflies in mortal night.  
Perhaps, one of those splendid shapes might turn  
Descend, and tell him all he longed to learn.

The fables seemed familiar; he could see  
A woman helping as her limber lad  
Struggled to take an apple from a tree  
That was all dragon-kept and snake-bestad.  
Fire and poison the scaled keepers shad  
Yet up he climbed, and she with praises cheered  
And beat the dragons from him as he neared.

Then was a scene which shewed the apple won  
Plainly it brought no shadow of a curse;  
No; but illumination of the Sun  
Upon the wonders of the Universe.  
They were as planets with the Moon for nurse  
And starry creatures hymned them as they saw  
World beyond world the glory of the law.

Then there were scenes which shewed the two, attended  
By those bright creatures, fighting with the foes  
Which wage on Man a battle never-ended:—  
The mortal Sickness with the cure none knows,  
Old Age and Poverty, and, King of those,  
Stupidity in accident of rule  
Dealing his death from being born a fool.

There was Stupidity with all his court,  
The wooden head, the iron heart again,  
The martial thing, all uniform and snort,  
The legal thing, all parchment and disdain,  
The cleric things, each carrying a chain,  
The politician things, each yapping loud,  
To subject apathy, the hopeless crowd.

Then followed paintings shewing them in rout  
As customs inadapt to human needs,  
And beauty came as wisdom drove them out  
And hope sprang starry from her scattered seeds,  
And hope brought faith in Man and lovely deeds  
And lovely buildings fitted for the flower  
Of Man, the spirit, living in his power.

The buildings in the paintings were in sight  
Though ruined and bejungled they still stood  
To prove that Man had lived in a delight

In spite of iron heart and head of wood . . .  
The starry creatures had o'ercome the crude  
Wonder had triumphed through the happy pair  
The hero and the woman painted there.

He looked upon their faces, and abased  
His head in awe from looking at the wise.  
A man and woman, calm and eager-faced  
With tranquil gladness looking from their eyes.  
No cruelty, no greediness, no lies,  
No treachery, no self, could wield a sway  
While such were crowned in Pavilastukay.

Himself was standing where the two were shewn  
Within the splendour they had holpen raise.  
There, in the painting, was the carven stone  
Just at his hand as in the ancient days  
The gilding on its fruits had ceased to blaze  
The traffic by its term was no more flowing,  
The painting shewed it when the clock was going.

There they endured, portrayed for him to see  
The city and her citizens of old  
Men without any talk about to be  
Or not to be, but excellently bold  
In spirit to press on, to touch, to hold,  
To bring into the world the shining thing  
Joy's golden crownnet upon Man the King.

"These, these," he muttered, "have discovered Life  
These were not kinged by cannibals or dupes,  
As in unhappy Europe, hell of Strife,  
Where with red beak the hawk of rapine stoops  
These had but Love and Joy, no other troops  
If they believed in God, they believed more  
In divine Man that divine Woman bore."

Knowing that what he saw had been attained  
And might again be had, he trod the courts.  
No face upon the walls was sad or pained,  
Merry alike their toiling and their sports;

Lovely alike their work-place and resorts  
In sunlight, by the river, among flowers,  
Man's earthly life, but different from ours.

"This is a dream," he muttered, "I shall wake.  
Life never has been thus; nor could be, ever.  
Death murders all, and half the living break  
From silly spite, the other half's endeavour.  
And sickness nulls the strong, and age the clever,  
And greed the grinder gnashes to enslave.  
Such is our crawl from cradle to the grave.

Yet, what is dirtier crime than to deny  
That what the best imagine may exist  
By right direction of Man's energy?  
One pluck of rein by some inspired wrist  
And forth the stupid staggers from the mist  
To laugh amid the lightning without fear  
No longer planet-sick, but Zeus's peer.

These painted people all are nobly born  
From splendid bodies filled with wit and grace,  
Want never ground, nor sorrow made them mourn,  
Tranquillity and joy are in each face  
And there a Prince is in a builder's place  
Laying a stone; and saving at the farms  
Guarding the cattle, no-one carries arms.

No diseased body, no afflicted mind  
Has wedded here; the stock is without flaw,  
Examples of a perfect human kind  
With Joy for bread and Excellence for law.  
This stock has stablished what its thinkers saw.  
Here supreme sight has gone with willing hand.  
And life has crowned what inspiration planned.

No politicians here polluted air  
With party cries; these spirits plainly knew  
That if the citizens are fashioned fair  
Fair dealing comes with little more ado.  
And cruelty with all its filthy crew  
Was banished hence; no male and female cannibals  
Rode here to sport in cruelty to animals.

Since all were nobly born and taught and fed  
 They had from birth the instinct to excel  
 To make life fairer and to lift Man's head  
 And bring his butterfly out of his shell,  
 To give was more delightful than to sell  
 Within this City where a human sense  
 Was reckoned richer than a lot of pence.

To make life fair; to make it fairer still,  
 To banish Death was here the constant thought  
 The bending and the lighting of the will  
 Forever, here, that deep solution sought.  
 That wretched Man should not be victim caught  
 But spirit freed, as by the will he may  
 Or surely was, in Pavilastukay.

They fought with bad heredity, and won.  
 They fought with poverty and made it die.  
 They fought with all the insults to the Sun  
 Under the sceptre of stupidity.  
 They fought illusion, howsoever high  
 Of god or race or state, as fetters all  
 Making Man subject, keeping him in thrall.

Their weapons were but thoughts found in the brain,  
 This is the thing remarkable, that here  
 They conquered no-thought, and the marks remain  
 Though dimmed, as beauty excellently dear."  
 Thus did the frescoes that remained appear  
 To Jonnox as he trod that city's ways.  
 The deer, ignoring him, returned to graze.

"Death and his adjuncts were the things they fought"  
 He muttered, "Death, the enemy of life  
 They battled, having nothing but a thought,  
 One quaking blade of an unfinished knife  
 Man cannot yet be winner in the strife;  
 They did not win that oldest of all wars,  
 But they delayed Death's knocking at the doors."

Deep in an alabastrine court, wherein  
 No art-irrupting root had yet begun  
 Though butterflies and sunlight entered in,

He found a painting like the living sun.  
"This is the loveliest painting ever done."  
He said, amazed; for there upon the wall  
Were children, going to a festival.

A hundred children going to a joy  
Transcendent in delight but not revealed,  
Some with balloons or flags or other toy  
Or berried twigs or flowers of the field  
Each in the sweetest gladness life can yield  
Although the elders by that brook of youth  
Smiled from a deeper joy in greater truth.

"O children, whither do you go?" he cried.  
"O gladness, living once in souls of men,  
Now only living while these walls abide  
Betwixt the jungle and the river-fen,  
Come as a sunlight into Man agen,  
Let killing and the plots for killing stop,  
And wisdom come from out her mountain-top.

This Palace and her City were not built  
By State-owned serfs, State-captained to make slaves  
By treachery, by blood and treasure spilt,  
By hecatombs of corpses without graves,  
But by a rapture, flooding-in in waves  
From some great ocean waiting for the cry  
From souls in deserts burnt under the sky.

Some leader here had wisdom and gave call  
Then his disciples cried, and soon, oh soon  
The joy of some was the delight of all  
And all souls carrolled like the birds in June.  
Full Summer and full rapture and full moon,  
And nothing starved and nothing warped by hate  
Man's three foes quelled, false prophet, brigand, state.

Somewhere within these thickets of live green  
So massed and tangled, are the tumbled bone  
Of this the City that was Crown and Queen  
Perhaps of all the cities Man has known.



They painted fair their gladness on the stone  
And then went hence together, Joy and Power.  
What death-bell tolled upon so fair an hour?

Ah me, what death destroyed this living hope?  
It was not war; for warriors use fire  
On men and things beyond their sorry scope.  
Famine, perhaps, or fever from the mire;  
Or did they take away with bright desire  
To reach some fabled town of Croatan  
To dwell there still, unknown of other Man.

In Europe, when thought comes, the want of thought  
Or want of thought in time, destroys it, sure.  
The politicians mock the warnings brought,  
The careless cry "Our comforts will endure".  
The stupid say "This thinking is a lure  
To bring men into trouble"; and the lazy  
Say "All this worry about art is crazy."

Little by little, what was tilled declines,  
The money for the corn-field goes in shares,  
A fungus spoils the fruit-trees and the vines,  
But that is in the country, and who cares?  
They build new blocks of flats in all the squares  
And put up rents, and rates and taxes rise  
And folly finds more followers than the wise.

Then state departments multiply in swarms  
An army with old weapons or with none,  
The others with their stacks of printed forms,  
All thinking "form filled-in is duty done"  
And when a building falls a worser one  
Succeeds, and then a worse, and then a hut.  
Then, an old cellar; then the shop is shut.

The end was sudden here; some mortal chance  
Earthquake, infection, blight or insect-pest  
Ruined the merriment and stopped the dance  
•And put the thinking under an arrest.  
Earth's littlest killed her greatest and her best

The unexpected happened without warning  
The Night came down and there was no more morning.

Thought could not reach the insect-carried germ  
That killed, and so they perished in their prime;  
For Nature is as happy with the worm  
As with the brain triumphant and sublime.  
But a belief in Man so splendours Time  
That, centuries after, seeing men shall wonder.  
Vision is lightning brief, and then the thunder.

Still, I have had this glimpse; and time remains  
To study more . . ." but here a klaxon's bray  
Came to his ears across the jungle-canec  
Impatient busmen called their fares away  
Again, again it blew; he could not stay  
His native guide came crying, "Tuan . . . oh . . .  
De honourable bus he wantee go."

He hurried thence, but still the klaxon blew.  
His fellow-tourists, tired, hot, athirst,  
Cried, "Buck it, Jonnox; what's been keeping you?"  
The driver and conductor scowled and cursed.  
They started back; and soon a tire burst  
And darkness came, and as the planets shone  
The guide remarked, "Me tinkee shippee gone."

It was not so; she stayed; they went aboard  
A choleric Captain, chafing with delay,  
Said, "You're the last consignment, by the Lord  
To see the wreck of Pavilastukay.  
You've wasted on us three good hours of day.  
Now we've to run Perimba Strait at night;  
And since the war-scare they've removed the light."

They were the last; the Company was told  
That visits to the site delayed the ship.  
The lunch-house shut up shop; the bus was sold,  
No other purser advertised the trip.  
The jungle reassumed its thwarted grip.  
And like the jungle, war resumed its fetters  
On war-delighting people and their betters.

Though reckoned rather frail to serve and die  
Jonnox was amply strong enough to feel  
The all-besetting, aching misery  
In all the months of hatred, blood and steel  
When common danger linked the commonweal.  
He bore with folly, danger, grief and pain,  
Thinking his thought "This must not be again".

When in his iron hat he trod his beats  
Crunching at every step the fruits of strife,  
The powdered brick and glass that had been streets,  
And sad at the stupidity of life,  
Then like the lifting thrilling of a fife  
Within his mind that City's image thrilled,  
Saying, "much better things have once been willed.

Much better things, which can again be had  
Will, therefore, to possess the life you saw  
Of men and women perfect, children glad  
Living at peace in cities without flaw.  
The anarchy that makes itself the law  
That must be killed before the holiday  
Of cities like to Pavilastukay.

And since men covet change, and tiger-men  
Are often born and often bring a change  
To make men dwellers in the caves agen,  
Well, reckon it unhappy, but not strange,  
And in the cellar of the burnt-out grange  
Or huddled in some drain amid decay  
Still think there once was Pavilastukay,

Which can be had again, if there be will.  
Pray not to any god for it, but plan  
Imagine, work, determine, struggle still  
That out of modern man there may come MAN.  
Life was a sorry thing when it began  
Life is a sorry thing when warrings sway.  
But Life was fair in Pavilastukay.

Therefore, come any devilry devised  
By things called soldiers serving things called states,  
Destroying all that wisdom ever prized,  
Infecting every mob with all their hates.  
I have a star for when the storm abates  
A cock that crows against the coming day  
England shall live like Pavilastukay."



*From*  
SALT-WATER BALLADS



## THE LOCH ACHRAY

THE *Loch Achray* was a clipper tall  
With seven-and-twenty hands in all.  
Twenty to hand and reef and haul,  
A skipper to sail and mates to bawl  
"Tally on to the tackle-fall, -  
Heave now 'n' start her, heave 'n' pawl!"  
Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.

Her crew were shipped and they said "Farewell,  
So-long, my Tottie, my lovely gell;  
We sail to-day if we fetch to hell,  
It's time we tackled the wheel a spell."  
Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.

The dockside loafers talked on the quay  
The day that she towed down to sea:  
"Lord, what a handsome ship she bel  
Cheer her, sonny boys, three times threel"  
And the dockside loafers gave her a shout  
As the red-funnelled tug-boat towed her out;  
They gave her a cheer as the custom is,  
And the crew yelled "Take our loves to Liz—  
Three cheers, bullies, for old Pier Head  
'N' the bloody stay-at-homes!" they said.  
Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.

In the grey of the coming on of night  
She dropped the tug at the Tuskar Light,  
'N' the topsails went to the topmast head  
To a chorus that fairly awoke the dead.  
She trimmed her yards and slanted South  
With her royals set and a bone in her mouth.  
Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
An old yarn learned at sea.



She crossed the Line and all went well,  
 They ate, they slept, and they struck the bell  
 And I give you a gospel truth when I state  
 The crowd didn't find any fault with the Mate,  
 But one night off the River Plate.

    Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
     An old yarn learned at sea.

It freshened up till it blew like thunder  
 And burrowed her deep, lee-scuppers under.  
 The old man said, "I mean to hang on  
 Till her canvas busts or her sticks are gone"—  
 Which the blushing looney did, till at last  
 Overboard went her mizzen-mast.

    Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
     An old yarn learned at sea.

~~Then a fierce squall struck the Loch Achray~~  
~~And bowed her down to her water-way;~~  
 Her main-shrouds gave and her forestay,  
 And a green sea carried her wheel away;  
 Ere the watch below had time to dress  
 She was cluttered up in a blushing mess.

    Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
     An old yarn learned at sea.

She couldn't lay-to nor yet pay-off,  
 And she got swept clean in the bloody trough;  
 Her masts were gone, and afore you knowed  
 She filled by the head and down she goed.  
 Her crew made seven-and-twenty dishes  
 For the big jack-sharks and the little fishes,  
 And over their bones the water swishes.

    Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
     An old yarn learned at sea.

The wives and girls they watch in the rain  
 For a ship as won't come home again.  
 "I reckon it's them head-winds," they say,  
 "She'll be home to-morrow, if not to-day."  
 I'll just nip home 'n' I'll air the sheets  
 'N' buy the fixins 'n' cook the meats  
 As my man likes 'n' as my man eats."

So home they goes by the windy streets,  
 Thinking their men are homeward bound  
 With anchors hungry for English ground,  
 And the bloody fun of it is, they're drowned! ———— ?  
     Hear the yarn of a sailor,  
     An old yarn learned at sea.

## TRADE WINDS

In the harbour, in the island, in the Spanish Seas,  
 Are the tiny white houses and the orange-trees,  
 And day-long, night-long, the cool and pleasant breeze  
     Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

There is the red wine, the nutty Spanish ale,  
 The shuffle of the dancers, the old salt's tale,  
 The squeaking fiddle, and the sougling in the sail  
     Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

And o' nights there 's fire-flies and the yellow moon,  
 And in the ghostly palm-trees the sleepy tune  
 Of the quiet voice calling me, the long low croon  
     Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

## SEA-FEVER

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,  
 And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,  
 And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white  
     sail's shaking,  
 And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running  
     tide  
 Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;  
 And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,  
 And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls  
     crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's  
like a whetted knife;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's  
over.

### THE WEST WIND

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries;  
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes.  
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown hills,  
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as tired as mine,  
Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's like wine.  
There is cool green grass there, where men may lie at rest,  
And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from the nest.

"Will you not come home, brother? you have been long away,  
It's April, and blossom time, and white is the may;  
And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is the rain,—  
Will you not come home, brother, home to us again?"

"The young corn is green, brother, where the rabbits run,  
It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm rain and sun.  
It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a man's brain,  
To hear the wild bees and see the merry spring again.

"Larks are singing in the west, brother, above the green  
wheat,  
So will you not come home, brother, and rest your tired feet?  
I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep for aching eyes,"  
Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries.

*From*  
**BALLADS AND POEMS**



## SIR BORS

WOULD I could win some quiet and rest, and a little  
case,  
In the cool grey hush of the dusk, in the dim green place of  
the trees,  
Where the birds are singing, singing, singing, crying aloud  
The song of the red, red rose that blossoms beyond the seas.

Would I could see it, the rose, when the light begins to  
fail,  
And a lone white star in the West is glimmering on the  
mail;  
The red, red passionate rose of the sacred blood of the  
Christ,  
In the shining chalice of God, the cup of the Holy Grail.

The dusk comes gathering grey, and the darkness dims the  
West,  
The oxen low to the byre, and all bells ring to rest;  
But I ride over the moors, for the dusk still bides and  
waits,  
That brims my soul with the glow of the rose that ends the  
Quest.

My horse is spavined and ribbed, and his bones come through  
his hide,  
My sword is rotten with rust, but I shake the reins and  
ride,  
For the bright white birds of God that nest in the rose have  
called,  
And never a township now is a town where I can bide.

It will happen at last, at dusk, as my horse limps down the  
fell,  
A star will glow like a note God strikes on a silver bell,  
And the bright white birds of God will carry my soul to  
Christ,  
And the sight of the Rose, the Rose, will pay for the years  
of hell.

### SPANISH WATERS

SPANISH waters, Spanish waters, you are ringing in my  
ears,  
Like a slow sweet piece of music from the grey forgotten  
years;  
Telling tales, and beating tunes, and bringing weary thoughts  
to me  
Of the sandy beach at Muertos, where I would that I could  
be.

There 's a surf breaks on Los Muertos, and it never stops to  
roar,  
And it 's there we came to anchor, and it 's there we went  
ashore,  
Where the blue lagoon is silent amid snags of rotting  
trees,  
Dropping like the clothes of corpses cast up by the seas.

We anchored at Los Muertos when the dipping sun was  
red,  
We left her half-a-mile to sea, to west of Nigger Head;  
And before the mist was on the Cay, before the day was  
done,  
We were all ashore on Muertos with the gold that we had  
won.

We bore it through the marshes in a half-score battered  
 chests,  
Sinking, in the sucking quagmires to the sunburn on our  
breasts,

Heaving over tree-trunks, gasping, damning at the flies and  
heat,  
Longing for a long drink, out of silver, in the ship's cool  
lazaret.

The moon came white and ghostly as we laid the treasure  
down,  
There was gear there'd make a beggarman as rich as Lima  
Town,  
Copper charms and silver trinkets from the chests of Spanish  
crews,  
Gold doubloons and double moidores, louis d'ors and  
portagues,

Clumsy yellow-metal earrings from the Indians of Brazil,  
Uncut emeralds out of Rio, bezoar stones from Guayaquil;  
Silver, in the crude and fashioned, pots of old Arica bronze,  
Jewels from the bones of Incas desecrated by the Dons.

We smoothed the place with mattocks, and we took and  
blazed the tree,  
Which marks yon where the gear is hid that none will ever  
see,  
And we laid aboard the ship again, and south away we  
steers,  
Through the loud surf of Los Muertos which is beating in  
my ears.

I'm the last alive that knows it. All the rest have gone their  
ways  
Killed, or died, or come to anchor in the old Mulatas Cays,  
And I go singing, fiddling, old and starved and in despair,  
And I know where all that gold is hid, if I were only there.

It's not the way to end it all. I'm old, and nearly blind,  
And an old man's past's a strange thing, for it never leaves  
his mind.  
And I see in dreams, awhile, the beach, the sun's disc  
dipping red,  
And the tall ship, under topsails, swaying in past Nigger  
Head.



I'd be glad to step ashore there. Glad to take a pick and go  
 To the lone blazed coco-palm tree in the place no others  
     know,  
 And lift the gold and silver that has mouldered there for years  
 By the loud surf of Los Muertos which is beating in my ears.

### 'CARGOES

QUINQUIREME of Nineveh from distant Ophir  
 Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine  
 With a cargo of ivory,  
 And apes and peacocks,  
 Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,  
 Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,  
 With a cargo of diamonds,  
 Emeralds, amethysts,  
 Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack  
 Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,  
 With a cargo of Tyne coal,  
 Road-rail, pig-lead,  
 Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

### CAPTAIN STRATTON'S FANCY

Oh some are fond of red wine, and some are fond of white  
 And some are all for dancing by the pale moonlight:  
 But rum alone 's the tippie, and the heart's delight  
     Of the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of Spanish wine, and some are fond of  
     French, "  
 And some'll swallow tay and stuff fit 'only for a wench;  
 But I'm for right Jamaica till I roll beneath the bench,  
 . Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are for the lily, and some are for the rose,  
 But I am for the sugar-cane that in Jamaica grows;  
 For it's that that makes the bonny drink to warm my copper  
 nose,

Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of fiddles, and a song well sung,  
 And some are all for music for to lilt upon the tongue;  
 But mouths were made for tankards, and for sucking at the  
 bung,

Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of dancing, and some are fond of dice,  
 And some are all for red lips, and pretty lasses' eyes;  
 But a right Jamaica puncheon is a finer prize

To the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some that 's good and godly ones they hold that it's a sin  
 To troll the jolly bowl around, and let the dollars spin;  
 But I'm for toleration and for drinking at an inn,

Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are sad and wretched folk that go in silken suits,  
 And there's a mort of wicked rogues that live in good reputes;  
 So I'm for drinking honestly, and dying in my boots,

Like an old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

## AN OLD SONG RE-SUNG

I saw a ship a-sailing, a-sailing, a-sailing,  
 With emeralds and rubies and sapphires in her hold;  
 And a bosun in a blue coat bawling at the railing,  
 Piping through a silver call that had a chain of gold;  
 The summer wind was failing and the tall ship rolled.

I saw a ship a-steering, a-steering, a-steering,  
 With roses in red thread worked upon her sails;  
 With sacks of purple amethysts, the spoils of buccaneering,  
 Skins of musky yellow wine, and silks in bales,  
 Her merry men were cheering, hauling on the brails.

I saw a ship a-sinking, a-sinking, a-sinking,  
 With glittering sea-water splashing on her decks,  
 With seamen in her spirit-room singing songs and drinking,  
 Pulling claret bottles down, and knocking off the necks,  
 The broken glass was chinking as she sank among the wrecks.

### THE EMIGRANT

GOING by Daly's shanty I heard the boys within  
 Dancing the Spanish hornpipe to Driscoll's violin,  
 I heard the sea-boots shaking the rough planks of the floor,  
 But I was going westward, I hadn't heart for more.

All down the windy village the noise rang in my ears,  
 Old sea-boots stamping, shuffling, it brought the bitter  
 tears,

The old tune piped and quavered, the lilts came clear and  
 strong,

But I was going westward, I couldn't join the song.

There were the grey stone houses, the night wind blowing  
 keen,

The hill-sides pale with moonlight, the young corn springing  
 green,

The hearth nooks lit and kindly, with dear friends good  
 to see.

But I was going westward, and the ship waited me.

### BEAUTY

I HAVE seen dawn and sunset on moors and windy hills  
 Coming in solemn beauty like slow old tunes of Spain;  
 I have seen the lady April bringing the daffodils,  
 Bringing the springing grass and the soft warm April rain.

I have heard the song of the blossoms and the old chant of  
 the sea,

And seen strange lands from under the arched white sails  
 of ships;

But the loveliest things of beauty God ever had showed  
 to me,

Are her voice, and her hair, and eyes, and the dear red curve  
 of her lips.

## SEEKERS

FRIENDS and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blessed  
 abode,  
 But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the road.

Not for us are content, and quiet, and peace of mind,  
 For we go seeking a city that we shall never find.

There is no solace on earth for us—for such as we—  
 Who search for a hidden city that we shall never see.

Only the road and the dawn, the sun, the wind, and the  
 rain,  
 And the watch fire under stars, and sleep, and the road again.

We seek the City of God, and the haunt where beauty dwells,  
 And we find the noisy mart and the sound of burial bells.

Never the golden city, where radiant people meet,  
 But the dolorous town where mourners are going about the  
 street.

We travel the dusty road till the light of the day is dim,  
 And sunset shows us spires away on the world's rim.

We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past and by,  
 Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the sky.

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blest abode,  
 But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the road.

## LAUGH AND BE MERRY

LAUGH and be merry, remember, better the world with a  
 song,  
 Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.  
 Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length of a span.  
 Laugh and be proud to belong to the old proud pageant of  
 man.

Laugh and be merry: remember, in olden time,  
God made Heaven and Earth for joy He took in a rhyme,  
Made them, and filled them full with the strong red wine of  
His mirth,  
The splendid joy of the stars: the joy of the earth.

So we must laugh and drink from the deep blue cup of the sky,  
Join the jubilant song of the great stars sweeping by,  
Laugh, and battle, and work, and drink of the wine out-  
poured  
In the dear green earth, the sign of the joy of the Lord.

Laugh and be merry together, like brothers akin,  
Guesting awhile in the rooms of a beautiful inn,  
Glad till the dancing stops, and the lilt of the music ends.  
Laugh till the game is played; and be you merry, my friends.

### JUNE TWILIGHT

THE twilight comes; the sun  
Dips down and sets,  
The boys have done  
Play at the nets.

In a warm golden glow  
The woods are steeped.  
The shadows grow;  
The bat has cheeped.

Sweet smells the new-mown hay;  
The mowers pass  
Home, each his way,  
Through the grass.

The night-wind stirs the fern,  
A night-jar spins;  
The windows burn  
In the inns.

Dusky it grows. The moon!  
The dew descends.  
Love, can this beauty in our hearts  
end?

## ROADWAYS

ONE road leads to London,  
One road runs to Wales,  
My road leads me seawards  
To the white dipping sails.

One road leads to the river,  
As it goes singing slow;  
My road leads to shipping,  
Where the bronzed sailors go.

Leads me, lures me, calls me  
To salt green tossing sea;  
A road without earth's road-dust  
Is the right road for me.

A wet road heaving, shining,  
And wild with seagulls' cries,  
A mad salt sea-wind blowing  
The salt spray in my eyes.

My road calls me, lures me  
West, east, south, and north;  
Most roads lead men homewards,  
My road leads me forth.

To add more miles to the tally  
Of grey miles left behind,  
In quest of that one beauty  
God put me here to find.

## THE GENTLE LADY

So beautiful, so dainty-sweet,  
So like a lyre's delightful touch—  
A beauty perfect, ripe, complete  
That art's own hand could only smutch  
And nature's self not better much.

So beautiful, so purely wrought,  
 Like a fair missal penned with hymns,  
 So gentle, so surpassing thought—  
 A beauteous soul in lovely limbs,  
 A lantern that an angel trims.

So simple-sweet, without a sin,  
 Like gentle music gently timed,  
 Like rhyme-words coming aptly in,  
 To round a moonéd poem rhymed  
 To tunes the laughing bells have chimed.

### TWILIGHT

TWILIGHT it is, and the far woods are dim, and the rooks  
 cry and call.  
 Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist, and a star  
 over all,  
 There by the rick, where they thresh, is the drone at an end,  
 Twilight it is, and I travel the road with my friend.

I think of the friends who are dead, who were dear long ago  
 in the past,  
 Beautiful friends who are dead, though I know that death  
 cannot last;  
 Friends with the beautiful eyes that the dust has defiled,  
 Beautiful souls who were gentle when I was a child.

### INVOCATION

O WANDERER into many brains,  
 O spark the emperor's purple hides,  
 You sow the dusk with fiery grains  
 When the gold horseman rides.  
 O beauty on the darkners hurled,  
 Be it through me you shame the world.

## A CREED

I HELD that when a person dies  
His soul returns again to earth;  
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise  
Another mother gives him birth.  
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain  
The old soul takes the roads again.

Such was my own belief and trust;  
This hand, this hand that holds the pen,  
Has many a hundred times been dust  
And turned, as dust, to dust again;  
These eyes of mine have blinked and shone  
In Thebes, in Troy, in Babylon.

All that I rightly think or do,  
Or make, or spoil, or bless, or blast,  
Is curse or blessing justly due  
For sloth or effort in the past.  
My life 's a statement of the sum  
Of vice indulged, or overcome.

I know that in my lives to be  
My sorry heart will ache and burn,  
And worship, unavailingly,  
The woman whom I used to spurn,  
And shake to see another have  
The love I spurned, the love she gave.

And I shall know, in angry words,  
In gibes, and mocks, and many a tear,  
A carrion flock of homing-birds,  
The gibes and scorns I uttered here  
The brave word that I failed to speak  
Will brand me dastard on the cheek.



And as I wander on the roads  
 I shall be helped and healed and blessed;  
 Dear words shall cheer and be as goads  
 To urge to heights before unguessed.  
 My road shall be the road I made;  
 All that I gave shall be repaid.

So shall I fight, so shall I tread,  
 In this long war beneath the stars;  
 So shall a glory wreath my head,  
 So shall I faint and show the scars,  
 Until this case, this clogging mould,  
 Be smithied all to kingly gold.

### WHEN BONY DEATH

WHEN bony Death has chilled her gentle blood,  
 And dimmed the brightness of her wistful eyes,  
 And changed her glorious beauty into mud  
 By his old skill in hateful wizardries;

When an old lichen'd marble strives to tell  
 How sweet a grace, how red a lip was hers;  
 When rheumy greybeards say, "I knew her well,"  
 Showing the grave to curious worshippers;

When all the roses that she sowed in me  
 Have dripped their crimson petals and decayed,  
 Leaving no greenery on any tree  
 That her dear hands in my heart's garden laid,

Then grant, old Time, to my green mouldering skull,  
 These songs may keep her memory beautiful.

### HER HEART

HER heart is always doing lovely things,  
 Filling my wintry mind with sitaple flowers,  
 Playing sweet tunes on my untuned strings,  
 Delighting all my undelightful hours.

She plays me like a lute, what tune she will,  
No string in me but trembles at her touch,  
Shakes into sacred music, or is still,  
Trembles or stops, or swells, her skill is such.

And in the dusty tavern of my soul  
Where filthy lusts drink witches' brew for wine,  
Her gentle hand still keeps me from the bowl,  
Still keeps me man, saves me from being swine.

All grace in me, all sweetness in my verse,  
Is hers, is my dear girl's, and only hers.

### BEING HER FRIEND

BEING her friend, I do not care, not I,  
How gods or men may wrong me, beat me down;  
Her word 's sufficient star to travel by,  
I count her quiet praise sufficient crown.

Being her friend, I do not covet gold,  
Save for a royal gift to give her pleasure;  
To sit with her, and have her hand to hold,  
Is wealth, I think, surpassing minted treasure.

Being her friend, I only covet art,  
A white pure flame to search me as I trace  
In crooked letters from a throbbing heart,  
The hymn to beauty written on her face.

### FRAGMENTS

TROY Town is covered up with weeds,  
The rabbits and the pismires brood  
On broken gold, and shards, and beads  
Where Priam's ancient palace stood.

The floors of many a gallant house  
Are matted with the roots of grass;  
The glow-worm and the nimble mouse  
Among her ruins flit and pass.

And there, in orts of blackened bone,  
The widowed Trojan beauties lie,  
And Simois babbles over stone  
And waps and gurgles to the sky.

Once there were merry days in Troy,  
Her chimneys smoked with cooking meals,  
The passing chariots did annoy  
The sunning housewives at their wheels.

And many a lovely Trojan maid  
Set Trojan lads to lovely things;  
The game of life was nobly played,  
They played the game like Queens and Kings.

So that, when Troy had greatly passed  
In one red roaring fiery coal,  
The courts the Grecians overcast  
Became a city in the soul.

In some green island of the sea,  
Where now the shadowy coral grows  
In pride and pomp and empery  
The courts of old Atlantis rose.

In many a glittering house of glass  
The Atlanteans wandered there;  
The paleness of their faces was  
Like ivory, so pale they were.

And hushed they were, no noise of words  
In those bright cities ever rang;  
Only their thoughts, like golden birds,  
About their chambers thrilled and sang.

They knew all wisdom, for they knew  
The souls of those Egyptian Kings  
Who learned, in ancient Babilu,  
The beauty of immortal things.

They knew all beauty—when they thought  
The air chimed like a stricken lyre,  
The elemental birds were wrought,  
The golden birds became a fire.

And straight to busy camps and marts  
The singing flames were swiftly gone;  
The trembling leaves of human hearts  
Hid boughs for them to perch upon.

And men in desert places, men  
Abandoned, broken, sick with fears,  
Rose singing, swung their swords agen,  
And laughed and died among the spears.

The green and greedy seas have drowned  
That city's glittering walls and towers,  
Her sunken minarets are crowned  
With red and russet water-flowers.

In towers and rooms and golden courts  
The shadowy coral lifts her sprays;  
The scrawl hath gorged her broken orts,  
The shark doth haunt her hidden ways.

But, at the falling of the tide,  
The golden birds still sing and gleam.  
The Atlanteans have not died,  
Immortal things still give us dream.

The dream that fires man's heart to make,  
To build, to do, to sing or say  
A beauty Death can never take,  
An Adam from the crumbled clay.

## BORN FOR NOUGHT ELSE

BORN for nought else, for nothing but for this,  
To watch the soft blood throbbing in her throat,  
To think how comely sweet her body is,  
And learn the poem of her face by rote.

Born for nought else but to attempt a rhyme  
That shall describe her womanhood aright,  
And make her holy to the end of Time,  
And be my soul's acquittal in God's sight.

Born for nought else but to expressly mark  
The music of her dear delicious ways;  
Born but to perish meanly in the dark,  
Yet born to be the man to sing her praise.

Born for nought else: there is a spirit tells  
My lot 's a King's, being born for nothing else.

## THE DEATH ROOMS

My soul has many an old decaying room  
Hung with the ragged arras of the past,  
Where startled faces flicker in the gloom,  
And horrid whispers set the cheek aghast:

Those dropping rooms are haunted by a death,  
A something like a worm gnawing a brain,  
That bids me heed what bitter lesson saith,  
The blind wind beating on the window-pane.

None dwells in those old rooms: none ever can—  
I pass them through at night with hidden head;  
Lock'd rotting rooms her eyes must never scan,  
Floors that her blessed feet must never tread.

Haunted old rooms: rooms she must never know,  
Where death-ticks knock and mouldering panels glow.

IGNORANCE

SINCE I have learned Love's shining alphabet,  
And spelled in ink what 's writ in me in flame,  
And borne her sacred image richly set  
Here in my heart to keep me quit of shame;

Since I have learned how wise and passing wise  
Is the dear friend whose beauty I extol,  
And know how sweet a soul looks through the eyes  
That are so pure a window to her soul;

Since I have learned how rare a woman shows  
As much in all she does as in her looks,  
And seen the beauty of her shame the rose,  
And dim the beauty writ about in books;

All I have learned, and can learn, shows me this—  
How scant, how slight, my knowledge of her is.

THE WATCH IN THE WOOD

WHEN Death has laid her in his quietude,  
And dimmed the glow of her benignant star,  
Her tired limbs shall rest within a wood,  
In a green glade where oaks and beeches are,

Where the shy fawns, the pretty fawns, the deer,  
With mild brown eyes shall view her spirit's husk,  
The sleeping woman of her will appear,  
The maiden Dian shining through the dusk.

And, when the stars are white as twilight fails,  
And the green leaves are hushed, and the winds swoon,  
The calm pure thrilling throats of nightingales  
Shall hymn her sleeping beauty to the moon.

All the woods hushed—save for a dripping rose,  
All the woods dim—save where a glow-worm glows.

Brimming the quiet woods with holiness,  
 The lone brown birds will hymn her till the dawn  
 The delicate, shy, dappled deer will press  
 Soft pitying muzzles on her swathed lawn.

The little pretty rabbits running by,  
 Will pause among the dewy grass to peep,  
 Their thudding hearts affrighted to espy  
 The maiden Dian lying there asleep.

Brown, lustrous, placid eyes of sylvan things  
 Will wonder at the quiet in her face,  
 While from the thorny branch the singer brings  
 Beauty and peace to that immortal place.

Until the grey dawn sets the woods astir  
 The pure birds' thrilling psalm will mourn for her.

### C. L. M.

In the dark womb where I began  
 My mother's life made me a man.  
 Through all the months of human birth  
 Her beauty fed my common earth.  
 I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,  
 But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave  
 She cannot see the life she gave.  
 For all her love, she cannot tell  
 Whether I use it ill or well,  
 Nor knock at dusty doors to find  
 Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,  
 She would not know her little son,  
 I am so grown. If we should meet  
 She would pass by me in the street,  
 Unless my soul's face let her see  
 My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind  
 My debt to her and womankind?  
 What woman's happier life repays  
 Her for those months of wretched days?  
 For all my mouthless body leeches  
 Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said  
 In thanks to that dear woman dead?  
 Men triumph over women still,  
 Men trample women's rights at will,  
 And man's lust roves the world untamed.

\* \* \* \*

O grave, keep shut lest I be shamed.

### WASTE

No rose but fades: no glory but must pass:  
 No hue but dims: no precious silk but frets.  
 Her beauty must go underneath the grass,  
 Under the long roots of the violets.

O, many glowing beauties Time has hid  
 In that dark, blotting box the villain sends.  
 He covers over with a coffin-lid  
 Mothers and sons, and foes and lovely friends.

Maids that were redly-lipped and comely-skinned,  
 Friends that deserved a sweeter bed than clay,  
 All are as blossoms down the wind,  
 Things the old envious villain sweeps away.

And though the mutterer laughs and church bells toll,  
 Death brings another April to the soul.



## THE WILD DUCK .

## THE WILD DUCK

TWILIGHT. Red in the west.  
 Dimness. A glow on the wood.  
 The teams plod home to rest.  
 The wild duck come to glean.  
 O souls not understood,  
 What a wild cry in the pool;  
 What things have the farm ducks seen  
 That they cry so—huddle and cry?

Only the soul that goes.  
 Eager. Eager. Flying.  
 Over the globe of the moon,  
 Over the wood that glows.  
 Wings linked. Necks a-strain,  
 A rush and a wild crying.

A cry of the long pain  
 In the reeds of a steel lagoon;  
 In a land that no man knows.

## THE WORD

My friend, my bonny friend, when we are old,  
 And hand in hand go tottering down the hill,  
 May we be rich in love's refined gold,  
 May love's gold coin be current with us still.

May love be sweeter for the vanished days,  
 And your most perfect beauty still as dear  
 As when your troubled singer stood at gaze  
 In the dear March of a most sacred year.

May what we are be all we might have been,  
 And that potential, perfect, O my friend,  
 And may there still be many sheafs to glean  
 In our love's acre, comrade, till the end.

And may we find when ended! is the page  
 Death but a tavern on our pilgrimage.

LYRICS FROM  
POMPEY THE GREAT



# I

## THE CENTURIONS

**M**AN is a sacred city, built of marvellous earth.  
 Life was lived nobly here to give this body birth.  
 Something was in this brain and in this eager hand.  
 Death is so dumb and blind, Death cannot understand.  
 Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limbs'  
 glory.  
 Death makes women a dream and men a traveller's story,  
 Death drives the lovely soul to wander under the sky,  
 Death opens unknown doors. It is most grand to die.

# II

## PHILIP SINGS

THOUGH we are ringed with spears, though the last hope is  
 gone,  
 Romans stand firm, the Roman dead look on.  
 Before our sparks of life blow back to him who gave,  
 Burn clear, brave hearts, and light our pathway to the grave.

# III

## CHANTY

KNEEL to the beautiful women who bear us this strange brave  
 fruit.  
 Man with his soul so noble: man half god and half brute.  
 Women bear him in pain that he may bring them tears.  
 He is a king on earth, he rules for a term of years.  
 And the conqueror's prize is dust and lost endeavour.  
 And the beaten man becomes a story for ever.  
 For the gods employ strange means to bring their will to be.  
 We are in the wise gods' hands and more we cannot see.

## SIXTY ODD YEARS AGO

**M**UCH worth was in the country: yet, today,  
That long dead England seems a land astray.  
Backward and blind, and proud of being both,  
Toiling to death in fundamental sloth,  
Governed by cackle-shops, whose fatal fun  
Pretended that scheme cackled was thing done.  
Muddled, yet meddling in affairs not ours  
With vestry morals and a eunuch's powers;  
Vain of a chaos of mean cities filled  
With any squalor any cared to build;  
Vain of a drunken untaught multitude  
Who breathed not, ate not, drank not, one thing good.

Such seems the England of that distant past:—  
Prepared for war, (the war before the last);  
Prepared for peace, that should create a race .  
Of cringing starvelings haggard in the face;  
Unlettered, unimpassioned and unled  
Want in the heart and clap-trap in the head;  
Working at games, despising art and thought,  
Its over-toiling millions making naught,  
Naught, for their lives' exhaustions put in pay,  
That thinking man would wish to see today.

Times were to come to shock the land awake.  
Danger of death displayed us our mistake.  
When death came striding, England let men see  
Patience and courage changing destiny.  
When death is winning and disaster shews,  
Then England lightens and her sign's the rose

We, who have seen this England left alone  
And felt the nations count us overthrown,  
And seen the greedy vultures stretching neck  
And gaping beak, for pieces of the wreck,

And heard the exultation of the cur  
 Yap the hyaenas on to finish her,  
 We know the nature of the sign we bear  
 A deathless rose that winter makes more fair.

When our survivors stand among their dead,  
 At some path's end where lunacy has led,  
 When courage learns, it cannot alter fate  
 Unweaponed, unsupported and too late;  
 When allies fall, and friends account it wise  
 To do the biddings of our enemies,  
 Then, our hope kindles; then we truly are;  
 Darkness must fall before we seem a star.

### GALLIPOLI, 1915

EVEN so was wisdom proven blind;  
 So courage failed, so strength was chained;  
 Even so the gods, whose seeing mind  
 Is not as ours, ordained.

### ON THE DEAD IN GALLIPOLI

THEY came from safety of their own free will  
 To lay their young men's beauty, strong men's powers  
 Under the hard roots of the foreign flowers  
 Having beheld the Narrows from the Hill.

## AN EPILOGUE

## AN EPILOGUE

I HAVE seen flowers come in stony places  
And kind things done by men with ugly faces,  
And the gold cup won by the worst horse at the races,  
So I trust, too.

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